



SEMIRAMIS

THE
WORKS
OF
M. DE VOLTAIRE.

Translated from the FRENCH.

WITH
NOTES, HISTORICAL, CRITICAL,
AND EXPLANATORY.

By T. FRANCKLIN, D. D.
Chaplain to his Majesty, and late Greek Professor in
the University of Cambridge.

T. SMOLLETT, M. D.
AND OTHERS.

A NEW EDITION.
VOLUME XXVI.

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THE
DRAMATIC WORKS
OF

Mr. DE VOLTAIRE,

Translated by the Rev. Dr. FRANKLIN.

VOL. II.

This VOLUME contains

A Dissertation on Ancient and Modern Tragedy.

Semiramis. A Tragedy.

*A Letter from Signor Algarotti to Signor Franchini,
Envoy at Florence, on the Tragedy of Julius Cæsar.*

The Death of Cæsar. A Tragedy.

*Preface to the Tragedy of Amelia; or, the Duke of
Foix.*

Amelia; or, the Duke of Foix. A Tragedy.

A
DISSERTATION

ON ANTIENT and MODERN
TRAGEDY.

IN

A LETTER to Cardinal QUIRINI, a Noble
VENETIAN, Bishop of BRESCIA, and Keeper of
the VATICAN LIBRARY.

My LORD,

WELL did it become a genius like yours, and
one who presides over the most antient library
in the world, to give yourself intirely up to letters.
Such heads of our church we may expect to see under
a pontiff who instructed the christian world before he
was appointed to rule over it: but if literature in ge-
neral stands indebted to you, still greater are my own
obligations for the honor which you did me in translating
my Henriade, and the poem of Fontenoy, into such ele-

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B

gant

gant verse. The two virtuous heroes whom I celebrated are become yours. You have condescended to embellish my work, that you might render the names of Henry IV. and Lewis XV. still more illustrious, and spread a taste for the polite arts throughout all Europe.

Amongst the many obligations which we of later ages have to the Italians, and particularly to the Popes and their ministers, we must not pass over the cultivation and improvement of the Belles-Lettres, which have soften'd by degrees the gross and barbarous manners of our northern climates, and to which we are in a great measure indebted for our politeness, our happiness, and our glory.

Under the great Leo X. with Grecian eloquence revived also the Grecian theatre. The Sophonisba of the celebrated prelate Trissino, the pope's nuncio, was the first regular tragedy seen in Europe after so many ages of barbarism : in like manner as the Calandra of cardinal Bibiena had been before that time the first comedy in modern Italy : you were the first that built spacious theatres, and gave the world some idea of that splendor of antient Greece, which drew together so many foreign nations at its solemn festivals, and became the universal model of perfection in every art and science.

If

If your nation has not always equal'd the antients in tragedy, it is not to be attributed to your language, which is copious, flexible, and harmonious, adapted to all subjects : but it is in my opinion extremely probable, that the great progress you have made in music has in some measure put a stop to your improvement in tragedy : one perfection has destroy'd another.

Permit me then to enter into a literary discussion with your lordship, on this head. Some people, perhaps, who are used to the general stile of dedications, will be surpris'd to find me comparing Greek with modern customs, instead of comparing the great men of antiquity with those of your illustrious house : but I am talking to a man of letters, and a philosopher ; to one from whose knowledge I may receive improvement ; with whom I have the honour to be associated in the most antient academy in Europe, whose members often employ themselves in researches of this nature : I am speaking, in short, to one who had much rather give me instructions, than receive encomiums from me.

PART the FIRST.

*On the Imitation of the GREEK Tragedy in the ITALIAN
and FRENCH Operas.*

One of your most celebrated authors tells us, that since the golden period in Athens, tragedy, deserted and forsaken, wanders about from country to country in search of some kind friend, that will assist and restore her to her former honours, but has as yet found none : if he means by this, that no nation amongst the moderns has theatres where the chorusses are almost always upon the stage, singing strophes, antistrophes, and epodes, accompany'd with serious dances ; that we do not set our actors upon stilts, or cover their faces with masks that express joy on one side and grief on the other : if he means that the declamation of your tragedies is not noted and accompany'd with instruments, he is certainly in the right, and I don't know whether all this is not rather in our favor ; perhaps our manner, by approaching more nearly to nature, is full as eligible as that of the Greeks, which had much more splendor and magnificence.

But if he only design'd to insinuate, that this noble art is not in general so much consider'd since the restoration

floration of letters as it was formerly ; that there are nations in Europe who have treated with ingratitude the successors of Sophocles and Euripides ; that our theatres are not like those superb edifices which the Athenians were so proud of ; and that we do not take the same pains as they did in representations, which are become so necessary in large and opulent cities ; we cannot but intirely agree with him.

Et sapit, & mecum facit, & Jove judicat æquo.

Where shall we find any public spectacle at present that can give us any idea of the Greek stage ? perhaps in your tragedies, or operas : what, say the critics, an Italian opera like the theatre of Athens ! yes, the Italian recitative is exactly the melopæa of the anti-ents, a declamation in notes, and accompany'd with instruments of music : this melopæa, which is tiresome and disagreeable in your bad tragic operas, is admirable in those few which are good. The chorusses which you have added of late years approach still nearer to the antient chorus, as the music in them is different from that of the recitative ; in the same manner as the strophe, antistrophe, and epode, among the Greeks, were set to music, tho' they differ'd from the melopæa of the dialogue : add to this, that in many of the tragic

operas of the famous Metastasio, the unities of place, time, and action, are observ'd; besides that, those pieces abound in that expressive poetry, and elegance of diction, which embellish nature without over-loading her; a happy talent, which none of the moderns have possess'd but Racine amongst us, and of all the English writers, Addison alone.

I am sufficiently aware, that these tragedies, which are so agreeable from the music, and magnificence of the spectacle, have indeed one fault which the Greeks always avoided; a fault which has often turn'd pieces finely written, and in all other respects extremely regular, into monstrous and unnatural productions; I mean, the fault of bringing into every scene little airs and catches that interrupt the action, merely to shew off the quavers of an effeminate voice, that exerts itself to the utter destruction of probability and good sense. The excellent author whom I just now mention'd, and who has taken several of his tragedies from French writers, has, by the force of genius, remedy'd in some measure this absurdity, which is become as it were necessary. The words of his airs or sonnets embellish the subject: they are full of pathos and passion, and sometimes not inferior to the finest odes of Horace; for a proof of which I shall beg leave to quote that very affecting

strophe

strophe sung by Arbaces, who is suppos'd to have been
falsely accused.

Vo solcando un mar crudele:

Senza vele:

E senza farte:

Ereme l'onda, il ciel s'imbruna,

Cresci il vento, e manca l'arte :

E il voler della fortuna

Son costretto a seguitar.

Infelice in quello stato.

Son da tutti abbandonato ;

Meco sola è l'innocenza

Che mi porta a naufragar.

To this I will beg leave to add another fine air, sung
by the king of the Parthians, conquer'd by Adrian,
when he endeavours to render even his defeat subser-
vient to his revenge.

Sprezza il furor del vento

Robusta quercia auvezza

Di cento venti è cento

L'injurie a tolerar.

E se pur cade al suolo

Spiega per l'onde il volo ;

E con quel vento istesso
Va contrastando il mar.

There are besides these many others of equal merit ; but what are the greatest beauties when out of their proper place ? What would an Athenian audience have said, if Oedipus and Orestes, just in the very minute of the discovery, the most interesting part of the drama, had entertained them with quavering out a fine air, or repeated similes to Electra and Jocasta ! We must therefore after all acknowledge, that the opera, so bewitching to an Italian ear by its musical attractions, tho' on the one hand it may be said to have reviv'd, has notwithstanding on the other, in effect, destroy'd the true Greek tragedy.

Our French opera deviates still more from the right point : as our melopœa differs more than yours from natural declamation, and is withal more languid. It will not allow our scenes their proper length, but requires short dialogues and little sententious remarks, every one of which makes a kind of sonnet.

Let those who are thoroughly acquainted with the state of literature in other nations, and whose knowledge is not confined to the airs of our own ballets, recollect that admirable scene in *la Clemenza di Tito*,
between

between Titus and his favorite, who had conspir'd against him : I mean the scene where Titus addresses himself to Sestus in these divine words :

Siam soli, il tuo sovrano
Non è presente : apri il tuo core à Tito,
Confida ti all' ami'co ; io ti prometto
Qu' Augusto n'ol saprà.

Or let them read the soliloquy that follows, where Titus has these words, words which shou'd be an eternal lesson for kings, and the admiration of all mankind :

—— Il torre altrui la vita
E faculta commune
Al piu vil della terra ; il dar la è solo
De' numi, & de' regnanti'.

These two scenes, comparable to the finest which Greece ever produced, if not superior to them ; these two scenes, worthy of Corneille when he is no declaimer, or of Racine when he is not flimsy ; these two scenes, which are not founded on opera love, but on the noblest sentiments of the human heart, are at least three times as long as the longest scenes in our musical tragedies : but these would not be borne on

our Lyric theatre, which is only supported by maxims of gallantry, and ill painted passions, except the *Armida*, and some fine scenes in *Iphigenia*, works more admir'd than imitated amongst us.

Amongst the many faults of our operas, we have, like you, a number of little detach'd airs, even in the most tragical parts; and which are more inexcusable than yours, because they have less affinity to the subject: the words are generally submitted intirely to the composers, who not being able to express themselves in the manly and vigorous terms of our language, require soft, vague, and effeminate words, foreign to the action, and adapted as well as they can to little ballads, like those which at Venice are call'd *Barcarole*. Where, for instance, is the connection between Theseus, just discover'd by his father on the point of being poison'd by him, and this ridiculous speech?

* Le plus sage
S'enflamme & s'engage
Sans scavoir comment.

But with all these faults I am still of opinion, that our good tragic operas, such as *Atys*, *Armida*, and

* i. e. The wisest men often fall in love, and engage themselves they know not how.

Theseus

Theseus may give us some idea of the Greek theatre, because they are sung like the antient tragedies, and because the chorus, even defective as it now is, consisting of tedious panegyrics on the * morality of love, does notwithstanding, in some measure, resemble the Grecian chorus, by continuing on the stage almost throughout the piece. It does not indeed, amongst us, always say what it ought to say, nor inculcate virtue ;

Et regat iratos, & amet peccare timentes ;

but, upon the whole, one may venture to assert, that the form of our tragic operas, consider'd with regard to some particulars, reminds us of the antient Greek tragedy. Several learned men, who are well acquainted with the works of antiquity, seem to think with me, that they are at once the copy and the destruction of the Athenian stage ; a copy of it, as they admit of the melopæa, the chorusses, machines, and deities, and at the the same time the destruction of it ; as they have taught our young men to be fonder of sound than

* The original is '*la morale amoureuse*,' perhaps none but a Frenchman can rightly comprehend what Mr. V. means by this expression : the *morality of love*, as I have literally translated it, does not convey to us the true and precise idea : I should be oblig'd to any of my readers, who are conversant with French operas, for a better interpretation of it,

sense ;

sense ; to prefer the tickling of their ears to the improvement of their minds ; the nonsense of sing-song to sublimity of sentiment ; and have besides contributed to the success of many insipid and ill-written performances, which have been supported by a few pleasing airs : and yet, in spite of all these faults, that enchantment which arises from a happy mixture of fine scenes, chorusses, dances, symphony, and a variety of decorations, bears all before it, and silences even criticism itself ; insomuch that the best comedy, or tragedy we have is never seen so often by the same people with half the pleasure as a midling opera. Beauties which are regular, noble, and severe, are seldom much sought after by vulgar minds. *Cinna*, perhaps, is play'd for two or three nights ; and the Venetian Festival shall run three months : a licentious epigram has more readers than an epic poem, and a little romance shall meet with more admirers than *Thuanus's* history. Our nobility very seldom employ good painters, and at the same time will quarrel about the distorted figures, and brittle ornaments from China. We gild and varnish cabinets, yet neglect true architecture : in short, real merit is overlook'd in almost every art and science, in favour of agreeable trifles.

PART

PART the SECOND.

FRENCH and GREEK tragedy compared.

Happily for us, true tragedy appear'd before any of our operas, which might have stifled and suppress'd it. Mairet was the first writer, who, in a tragedy imitated from the Sophonisba of Trissino, introduc'd the three unities which you had taken from the Greeks. By degrees our stage became more and more refined, and shook off that indecency and barbarism which disgraced so many others about this period, and serv'd at the same time for an excuse to those whose unenlighten'd severity of manners banish'd all public representations.

Our actors did not indeed appear like those of Athens, lifted up on cothurni, which were absolutely stilts, nor were their faces hid under enormous masks with brass pipes to them, to increase the sound of the voice, and make it more sonorous and terrible: neither had we the melopæa of the Greeks, nor any thing besides a simple harmonious declamation, the same which you had for some time practis'd. In short, our tragedies were a closer imitation of nature: we substituted history in the room of Greek fables; politicks, ambition, love and jealousy took their turns to imitate the scene; whilst Augustus, Cinna, Cæsar and Cornelia, names
far

far more respectable than the fabulous heroes of antiquity, often made their appearance on our stage, and spoke as they wou'd have done in antient Rome.

I shall not pretend to assert, that the French théâtre was in all respects superior to the Greek, and ought to bury it in oblivion : Inventors have always held the first place in the memories of men ; but whatever respect we may have for the geniusses of former ages, it does not prevent our often receiving much more pleasure from those who succeeded them. We admire Homer, but we read Tasso, and find in him a variety of beauties which Homer was a stranger to. We admire Sophocles also, and yet how many of our good tragic writers have master-strokes which, if Sophocles had liv'd after them, he would have been proud to imitate. The Greeks wou'd have learn'd from many of our excellent moderns to unravel their plots more naturally, and to link their scenes together in that artful, though imperceptible manner, so as never to leave the stage empty, and to make the actors go in and out with some reason for so doing. — In this the antients are frequently deficient ; and in this Triffino has unfortunately imitated them.

I am satisfy'd, for example, that Sophocles and Euripides wou'd have consider'd the first scene of Bajazet

jazet as a school of instruction, where an old general, by the questions which he asks, informs us, that he is meditating some grand enterprize.

But what did our brave janissaries ? they
Pay homage to their sultan, think'st thou, Osmyn,
It is sincere, know'st thou the hearts of men,
Or can'st thou read their secret purposes ?

And a moment after,

Think'st thou with rapture they wou'd follow me,
And hearken to their visier's voice again ?

They wou'd have admir'd the artful method which this conspirator takes in the discovery of his schemes, and the account which he gives of his actions ; a merit which was unknown to the antient writers. That mixture of the passions ; that contrast of opposite sentiments ; those animated dialogues between rivals of both sexes ; those quarrels, reciprocal threats and complaints ; those interesting disputes where every thing is said that ought to be said ; with all those various incidents that are so well manag'd by modern writers, wou'd have astonish'd them. They might perhaps have found fault with Hypolitus for being so ridiculously in love with Aricia, or with his governor for giving him lectures in gallantry, when he says,

Where

Where woud'st thou thyself have been,

If still, like thee, thy mother had refus'd,

With mutual love, to answer Theseus' vows ?

Words taken from Pastor Fido, and much fitter for a shepherd than the governor of a prince : but the same illustrious criticks wou'd be struck with admiration at hearing Phædra cry out,

Who wou'd have e'er believ'd it, my Oenone,

I have a rival : yes, Hippolitus,

Whose savage and unconquerable heart

Was ne'er by pity or affection mov'd,

This tyrant loves, this conqu'ror is subdued.

The despair of Phædra on the discovery of her rival is surely infinitely preferable to the tedious and ill-plac'd satire on learned women, which Euripides has put in the mouth of his Hypolitus, who degenerates from the hero into a low comic character. The Greeks wou'd, above all, have been astonish'd at those strokes of the true sublime which abound in our modern writers : how wou'd they have been charm'd with this :

What cou'd he do, my lord, when three oppos'd him ?

He might have dy'd.

Or the answer, still perhaps more beautiful and affecting, which Hermione makes Orestes ; when, after
having

having insisted on his murdering Pyrrhus, she finds herself unfortunately obey'd, and crys out,

What had he done, and wherefore did'st thou slay him ?

What right had'st thou ? who bade thee ?

ORESTES.

O ye gods !

Did not Hermione herself command me ?

HERMIONE.

And shou'd thou have believ'd a frantic lover ?

Indulge me in one more quotation from Cæsar's speech, when they present him with the urn inclosing the ashes of Pompey.

Ye sacred reliques of a demi-god,
Whose noble deeds and ever-honour'd name,
All conqu'ror as I am, I scarce can equal.

The Greeks, my lord, have beauties of another kind, but I appeal to you whether they have any that resemble these.

I will even go farther, and venture to assert that the antients, who were so passionately fond of liberty, and have so often said that there could be no dignity of sentiment but in a common-wealth, might learn to
speak

speaking with energy, even on liberty itself, from some of our tragedies which were written in the bosom of monarchy.

The moderns have moreover succeeded oftener than the antients in subjects of pure invention. We had many performances of that kind in the time of cardinal Richlieu : it was indeed his peculiar taste, as well as that of the Spaniards : he was fond of forming plots and characters, and afterwards giving names to the persons of the drama, as we do in comedy : and in this he frequently amus'd himself, as an agreeable relief from the fatigue of public business. The Vincellus of Rotrou is intirely in this taste, and all the story fabulous : the author wanted to paint a young man of violent passions, with a mixture of good and bad qualities ; a father tender and weak : in some part of the performance he has succeeded. Heraclius and the Cid, taken from the Spanish, are both of them invented stories : there was indeed an emperor call'd Heraclius, and a Spanish captain who had the name of Cid ; but scarce one of the adventures which the authors of the tragedies attribute to them ever really happen'd. In Zara and Alzira (if I may take the liberty to mention them) and which I only do because they are well known, and therefore may serve better for examples) every thing is feign'd,
even

even the names. I cannot imagine after this, how father Brumoy cou'd say, in his account of the Greek theatre, that tragedy will not admit of feign'd subjects, and that this liberty was never taken at Athens. He then sets himself to work to find out a reason for a thing which never was or cou'd be. 'The reason, says he, I believe may be found, in the nature of the human soul; 'nothing can move it but probability: now it is not 'probable that facts so noble as those which must be 'the subject of tragedy shou'd be absolutely unknown: 'if therefore the poet invents the whole subject, even 'to the very names, the spectator is shock'd; every 'thing appears incredible to him; and the piece can 'never have its proper effect for want of probability.'

First, I shall beg leave to observe, it is false that the Greeks did not admit this species of tragedy, for Aristotle expressly mentions Agatho as a writer celebrated for it; and, secondly, it is equally false that these subjects never succeed; experience decides against Brumoy in this particular: in the third place, the reason which he gives for the poor effect which this kind of tragedy must have is no less absurd; he must have little knowledge of the human heart, who thinks it cannot be mov'd by fiction: in the fourth place, a subject of pure invention, and a true subject not known, are absolutely
the

the same thing to the spectator ; and as our stage takes in subjects from every age and nation, a spectator must turn over all the books that ever were written before he can possibly know whether what he sees represented be fable or history ; but he will certainly never take that trouble : if the piece is moving and pathetic, he will naturally be affected by it ; and when he sees Polyeucte will never think of saying, I do not remember to have heard talk of Paulinus and Severus, such people as these ought not to move or affect me !

Brumoy shou'd only have observ'd, that pieces of this kind are more difficult to write than any others. The character of Phædra was already in Euripides : her declaration of love in Seneca the tragedian : all the scene between Augustus and Cinna in Seneca the philosopher : but Severus and Paulinus must be the product of the author's own brain. But if father Brumoy is mistaken with regard to this, and a few other particulars, his book is notwithstanding upon the whole one of the best and most useful performances we have ; and though I find fault with his errors, I have at the same time the highest esteem for his taste and erudition.

To

To return therefore to the subject in hand, I once more assert, that it wou'd be want of feeling and judgment not to acknowledge that the French stage is infinitely superior to the Greek, in the artful conduct of its plots, in invention, and beauties of diction and sentiment without number; but, at the same time, it wou'd be the heighth of partiality and injustice not to confess, that love and gallantry have almost ruin'd our stage, and depriv'd us of almost every advantage.

It cannot but be denied, that, amongst four hundred tragedies which have been exhibited on our stage, since the time when it began to flourish, there are scarce more than ten or twelve which are not founded on some love intrigue, which is certainly much fitter for comedy: the piece indeed is generally the same, the plot form'd by jealousy and a rupture, and ended in a marriage: one continued scene of coquetry, in short a down right comedy, wherein princes act the principal parts, and a little blood is shed for form's sake. The greater part of these pieces were so very like comedies, that the actors began at last to recite them in the same tone as they did what we call high or serious comedy, which contributed in a great manner to degrade tragedy, all the pomp and magnificence of declamation being intirely forgot. The players piqued themselves on the

the merit of speaking verse exactly in the same manner as prose, without considering that a language above the ordinary language ought to be repeated in * tone above the vulgar and familiar tone : and if some actors had not happily corrected this fault, our tragedy wou'd soon have dwindled into a heap of discourses on love and gallantry, repeated without force or spirit, in a cold and lifeless manner : as a proof of this, it is not long since, amongst every company of players, the principal parts in tragedy were known only by the names of the gentleman lover, and the lady lover. If a stranger had ask'd at Athens which was their best actor of the lover in Iphigenia, Hecuba, the Heraclides, Oedipus, or Electra, they wou'd not even have understood what he meant by such a question.

The French stage has indeed of late years endeavour'd to wash off this stain by some tragedies, wherein love is represented as a furious and terrible passion, worthy of the theatre ; and by some others, where even the name of love is not so much as mention'd : never did

* Notwithstanding what Mr. Voltaire has here advanc'd in favour of his tragedy tone, it is extremely disgusting to an English ear ; nor can indeed any good reason be given, why heroes and heroines shou'd not talk like other people : but mouthing, ranting, and whining, were for a long time as fashionable on our own, as they can possibly be on the French stage, till nature and Garrick united to convince us of our error, and lead us into a better method.

love cause so many tears to flow as nature hath: the heart is generally but slightly touch'd by the complaints of a lover, but it is deeply affected by the melancholy situation of a mother on the point of losing her son: certainly it was only in compliment to his friend that Despreaux said,

|| Love finely painted by the poet's art,
Opens the surest passage to the heart.

The path of nature is a thousand times more sure, as well as more noble. The finest strokes in Iphigenia are those where Clytemnæstra defends her daughter, and not those where Achilles defends his mistress.

In Semiramis, the design was to have exhibited a spectacle even more affecting than that in Merope, with all the pomp of the antient Greek theatre. It wou'd be a melancholy consideration to reflect, that after our great masters had surpass'd the antients in almost every part of tragedy, we shou'd fall short of them in our representations of it; but on our stage, one of the greatest obstacles to any grand and pathetic action is, the number of spectators, that croud in with

|| ——— De l'amour la sensible punture
Est pour aller au cœ'ur la route la plus sûre.
See Boileau's Art Poétique.

the

the actors; an indecency which caus'd remarkable confusion on the first night of Semiramis. The first actress from London was present at the representation, and was astonish'd : she cou'd not conceive how any people in the world cou'd be such enemies to their own pleasures, as to spoil a sight which they might have enjoy'd. This abuse was corrected the ensuing nights, during the run of Semiramis, and might easily be intirely put a stop to. We may think slightly of it if we please, but an inconvenience like this is sufficient to deprive us of a number of excellent productions, which I make no doubt wou'd have appear'd if we had kept our stage free, proper for action, and such as it is in all other parts of Europe.

But this is most certainly not the only evil which calls for a remedy amongst us : I cannot sufficiently express my astonishment and concern at the little care which we take in France to make our theatres worthy of the excellent performances represented in them, and of the nation which encourages them : surely Cinna and Athaliah deserve a better place than a tennis-court, with a few vile decorations at top, in a bad taste, and where the spectators are placed without any order or decorum ; some upon the stage itself, others below in what they call the parterre, where they are crouded
and

and press'd together in the most indecent manner, throwing themselves sometimes one upon another, as if there was an insurrection of the populace: whilst as far north as we can well travel, our dramatic works are exhibited in theatres a thousand times more magnificent, and with much more decency and decorum.

But above all, how far do we fall short of that good sense and fine taste, with regard to every thing of this kind, which reigns throughout Italy! It reflects shame and disgrace upon us to suffer these reliques of barbarism to remain in a city so large, so well-peopled, so rich, and so polish'd as Paris is; whilst, at the same time, a tenth part of what we expend every day in trifles, as costly as they are useless, might enable us to raise public monuments of every kind that would render it as magnificent as it is populous, and one day perhaps place it on a level with Rome itself, which is our model in every thing. This was one of the great designs of the immortal Colbert. I flatter myself you will pardon this digression, and attribute it to the love I bear to the arts and to my country. I am not without hopes, that one day or other our magistrates may be inspir'd with the noble ambition of imitating the magistrates of Athens, Rome, and modern Italy.

A theatre, built according to the best antient rules, shou'd be very extensive ; shou'd represent a part of some public place, the peristyle of a palace, or the entrance to a temple ; and shou'd be so contriv'd, that one person of the drama, though seen by the spectators, might not be seen by the other actors, if at any time there shou'd be an occasion for concealing him : it shou'd be made so as to deceive the eye, which is the first thing to be consider'd : it shou'd be capable of exhibiting the greatest pomp and splendor imaginable : every spectator shou'd see and hear equally well in whatever part he was seated. But how can this be ever expected upon a narrow stage, in the midst of a croud of young fellows, who will scarce leave the actors ten foot space ? Hence it arises, that most of our plays are nothing but long discourses ; all theatrical action is lost, or if practis'd, appears ridiculous. This abuse remains, like many others, because it is establish'd ; and for the same reason that we do not pull our houses down, though we know them to be badly built. A public nuisance is seldom remov'd but at the last extremity. When I speak of theatrical action, I mean dress, ceremony, assemblies of the people, incidents and events necessary to the piece ; and not any of those shews frequently exhibited, rather childish than

than grand, the resources of art to supply the deficiencies of the poet, and amuse the eye when they are incapable of charming the ear, or moving the heart. I saw a play at London, wherein was represented the coronation of a king of England with all the exactness imaginable: a knight, arm'd at all points, enter'd on horseback upon the stage. I have often heard people telling strangers, O! the charming opera that we have been at, we saw above two hundred guards upon the full gallop. These gentlemen had no idea, that four good verses in a piece were better than a troop of horse. At Paris we have a company of strollers, who seldom having any thing of real merit to represent, entertain us with fire-works: but, many years ago, Horace, who had perhaps more taste than any of the antients, finely ridiculed all those fooleries that bewitch'd the vulgar.

Effeda festinant, pilenta, petorrta, naves;
 Captioum portatur ebur, captiva Corinthus.
 Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus;
 Spectaret populum ludis attentius ipsi.

PART the THIRD.

On SEMIRAMIS.

You will perceive, my lord, from the foregoing observations, that it was a pretty bold undertaking to represent Semiramis assembling the several orders of the state, and declaring to them her intended marriage; the ghost of Ninus, coming out of the tomb to prevent the incest, and revenge his own death; Semiramis entering the mausolæum, and returning from it, wounded by her son, and just expiring. There was reason to fear that a spectacle of this kind wou'd be disagreeable to many; and in effect so it was; for three parts of those who frequent the theatre, and were used to amorous elegies, combined together against this new species of tragedy. We are told that formerly, in a city of antient Greece, rewards were proposed for those who cou'd invent any new pleasure: the direct contrary happen'd with regard to Semiramis. Whatever efforts were made, notwithstanding, to suppress this species of the drama, which has in it all the terror of true tragedy, they cou'd not succeed: it was eccho'd on every side, both in writing and conversation, that apparitions were childish things to be produced

produced before a refined and sensible people. But why so? did not all antiquity believe in them, and shall we not conform to antiquity! Has not our religion itself given a sanction to these extraordinary strokes of providence? and is it notwithstanding ridiculous and absurd to repeat them?

The Roman philosophers had no faith in ghosts in the time of the emperors, and yet young Pompey raises one in the Pharsalia. The English have certainly no more belief in spirits than the Romans had, and yet they see every day with pleasure, in the tragedy of Hamlet, the ghost of a king, who appears nearly the same as the apparition of Ninus did at Paris. I am at the same time far from justifying the tragedy of Hamlet in every respect; it is a gross and barbarous piece, and wou'd never be borne by the lowest of the rabble in France or Italy. Hamlet runs mad in the second act, and his mistress in the third; the prince † kills the father of his mistress and fancies

C 3

he

† The original is 'croyant tuer un rat,' and a little before we are told that Hamlet 'devient fou au second acte' runs mad in the second act. Mr. Voltaire, as is evident from the whole which he has here advanc'd, seems, at the time when he wrote this, to have been very little acquainted with Hamlet, who, we all know, did neither run mad, nor take Polonius for a rat: but, as Shakespear takes care to inform us, when the wind sat fair,
knew

he is killing a rat ; and the heroine of the play throws herself into the river. They dig her grave upon the stage, and the grave-diggers, holding the dead-men's skulls in their hands, talk nonsense worthy of them. Hamlet answers their abominable stuff by some whimsies not less disgusting : during this time one of the actors makes the conquest of Pologne. Hamlet, his mother, and father-in-law, drink together upon the stage : they sing at table, quarrel, beat and kill one another : one wou'd think the whole piece was the product of the imagination of a drunken savage : and yet, amongst all these gross irregularities, which make the English theatre even at this day so absurd and barbarous, we find in Hamlet, which is still more strange and unaccountable, some sublime strokes worthy of the greatest genius. It seems as if nature took pleasure to unite in the head of Shakespear all that we can imagine great and forcible, together with all that the grossest dullness cou'd produce of every thing that is most low and detestable.

knew a hawk from a hernshaw. But Mr. V. like other great geniusses, is sometimes a little too apt to take things upon trust, and judge hastily ; he wou'd not otherwise so rashly, and so frequently, condemn the inimitable Shakespear.

It

It must be acknowledg'd, that, amongst the beauties that shine forth in the midst of all these horrid extravagancies, the ghost of Hamlet's father is one of the most striking : it has always a strong effect on the English, I mean on those who are the best judges, and are most hurt by the irregularity of their old theatre. This ghost inspires more terror, even in the reading, than the apparition of Darius in the Persians of Æschylus : and why does it ? because Darius, in Æschylus, only appears to foretell the misfortunes of his family ; whereas, in Shakespear, the ghost of Hamlet appears to demand vengeance, and to reveal secret crimes. It is neither useless, nor brought in by force, but serves to convince mankind, that there is an invisible power, the master of nature. All men have a sense of justice imprinted on their hearts, and naturally wish that heaven wou'd interest itself in the cause of innocence : in every age therefore, and in every nation, they will behold with pleasure, the supreme being engag'd in the punishment of crimes which cou'd not come within the reach of human laws : this is a consolation to the weak, and a restraint on the insolence and obstinacy of the powerful.

———Heaven

Will oft suspend its own eternal laws
 When justice calls, reversing death's decree,
 Thus to chastise the sov'reigns of the earth,
 And terrify mankind——

Thus Semiramis speaks to the high priest of Babylon,
 and thus the successor of Samuel might have spoke
 to Saul, when the ghost of Samuel came to tell him
 of his condemnation.

I will go still further, and venture to affirm, when
 an extraordinary circumstance of this kind is men-
 tion'd in the beginning of a tragedy, when it is pro-
 perly prepar'd, when things are so situated as to ren-
 der it necessary, and even look'd for and desir'd
 by the spectators; it ought then to be consider'd as
 perfectly natural: it is at the same time sufficiently
 obvious, that these bold strokes are not to be too
 often repeated.

Nec Deus interfit nisi dignus vindice nodus.

I most certainly wou'd not, in imitation of Euri-
 pides, make Diana descend at the end of the tragedy
 of Phædra, nor Minerva in the Iphigenia in Tauris;

nor

nor wou'd I, as Shakespear has done, bring in the evil genius of Brutus appearing to him in his tent : I wou'd never make use of such resources but when they cou'd raise terror, and at the same time carry on the business of the play. I cou'd wish, moreover, that the intervention of these supernatural beings shou'd not appear absolutely necessary : with regard to this I must explain myself : if the plot of a tragedy is so intricate and perplex'd, that we can no way disentangle ourselves but by the help of a prodigy, the spectator perceives the distress the poet is in, and consequently the weakness of his resource : he only sees a writer who has made a false step, and is put to his shifts to recover himself : the more astonishing it is, the more the design appears.

Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

But I will suppose the author of a tragedy had it principally in view to inform mankind, that God sometimes punishes extraordinary crimes by extraordinary means ; I will suppose that his piece was so artfully conducted, that the spectator every moment expected the ghost of an assassinated king demanding vengeance, though the appearance was by no means

necessary to the clearing up an embarrass'd plot. I say, that thus circumstanced, a prodigy of this kind, supposing it to be well manag'd, wou'd have a great effect, in any language, age, or country whatever.

Such is, pretty nearly, the conduct of Semiramis, (those beauties excepted with which it was not in my power to adorn it) from the very first scene we perceive that every thing must be done by the intervention of divine power ; and, from act to act, every thing turns on this particular notion. 'Tis an avenging God who inspires Semiramis with that remorse which she never wou'd have felt in her prosperity, if the voice of Ninus himself had not terrify'd her in the midst of all her triumphs : the same God, by that remorse which he had inspir'd, prepares the way for her punishment ; and hence arises the whole instructive moral of the piece. The design of the ancient tragedies was generally to establish some great maxim or sublime truth : thus Sôphocles finishes his Oedipus with observing, that no man can be called happy before his death ; and in Semiramis the moral is contain'd in these verses :

There are crimes
Offended heaven never will forgive.

A maxim

A maxim much more important than that of Sophocles: but what instruction, the reader perhaps may object, can arise to the generality of mankind from a crime so uncommon, and a punishment still more extraordinary? I acknowledge, that the catastrophe of Semiramis cannot often occur, but what happens every day may be met with in the last verses of this piece;

————— remember that our secret crimes
Are witness'd by the gods —————

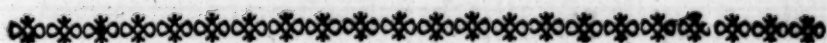
There are few families on earth where this may not be sometimes apply'd: with regard to particulars of this kind, tragical subjects, that are ever so much above the fortunes of common people, have a real respect to and connection with the manners of all mankind.

I might indeed apply to Semiramis, the moral with which Euripides finishes his *Alcestes*, a piece wherein the marvellous has a much greater share than in mine, viz. that the gods employ the most wonderful and astonishing means in the execution of their divine decrees, and that the great events which they bring about, surpass the understandings of men.

Because,

Because, my lord, and only because this little work of mine breaths the purest and most severe morality, I have taken the liberty to address it to your lordship. True tragedy is the school of virtue, and the only difference between a refined theatre, and books of morality is, that the instruction of the former is all in action, that it is more interesting, and heightened by the charms of an art invented to make earth and heaven happy, and which was therefore truly call'd, the language of the gods. You, my lord, who possess this talent with so many others, will, I doubt not, pardon me this long detail, on a subject which perhaps has never yet been thoroughly understood; but which wou'd no longer be obscure, if your lordship wou'd deign to communicate to me those lights into antiquity, of which you have so perfect a knowledge.

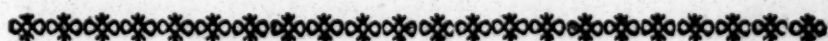
SEMIRAMIS.



SEMIRAMIS.

A

TRAGEDY.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SEMIRAMIS.

ARSACES, or NINIAS.

AZEMA, a Princess of the Family of Belus.

ASSUR, a Prince of the Family of Belus.

OROES, High-Priest.

OTANES, a Favourite of Semiramis.

MITRANES, Friend of Arsaces.

CEDAR, Friend of Assur.

Λ
Guards, Magi, Slaves, Attendants.

Y. D. Y. T. R. A. C. E. D. Y.
SEMIRAMIS.

SEMIRAMIS.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

The scene represents a large peristyle, at the bottom of which is the palace of Semiramis. Gardens with fine hanging terrasses, rais'd above the palace : on the right hand the temple of the magi, and on the left a mausolæum adorn'd with obelisks.

SCENE I.

ARSACES, MITRANES.

Two slaves at a distance carrying a coffer.

ARSACES.

ONCE more, Mitranes, thou behold'st thy friend,

Who, in obedience to the royal mandate
In secret sent, revisits Babylon,
The seat of empire : how Semiramis

Imprints

Imprints the image of her own great soul
 On ev'ry object ! these stupendous piles,
 These deep enclosures, where Euphrates pours
 His tributary waves ; the temple's pride,
 The hanging gardens, and the splendid tomb
 Of Ninus, wond'rous monuments of art !
 And only less to be admir'd than her
 Who rais'd them ! here, in all her splendid pomp,
 More honour'd than the monarchs of the East,
 Arfaces shall behold this glorious queen.

M I T R A N E S.

O my Arfaces, credit not the voice
 Of Fame, she is deceitful oft, and vain ;
 Perhaps hereafter thou may'st weep with me,
 And admiration on a nearer view
 May turn to pity.

A R S A C E S.

Wherefore ?

M I T R A N E S.

Sunk in grief,
 Semiramis hath spread o'er ev'ry heart
 The sorrows which she feels ; sometimes she raves,
 Filling the air with her distressful cries,
 As if some vengeful God pursued her ; sits
 Silent and sad within these lonely vaults,

Sacred

Sacred to night, to sorrow, and to death,
Which mortals dare not enter ; where the ashes
Of Ninus, our late honour'd sov'reign, lie :
There will she oft fall on her knees and weep :
With slow and fearful steps she glides along,
And beats her breast besprinkled with her tears :
Oft as she treads her solitary round,
Will she repeat the names of son and husband,
And call on heav'n, which in its anger seems
To thwart her in the zenith of her glory.

A R S A C E S.

Whence can her sorrows flow ?

M I T R A N E S.

Th' effect is dreadful ;
The cause unknown.

A R S A C E S.

How long hath she been thus
Oppress'd, Mitranes ?

M I T R A N E S.

From the very time
When first her orders came to bring Arsaces.

A R S A C E S.

Me, said'st thou ?

M I T R A N E S.

MITRANES.

You, my lord: when Babylon
 Rejoicing met to celebrate thy conquests,
 And saw the banners thy victorious arm
 Had wrested from our vanquish'd foes; when first
 Euphrates brought to our delighted shore
 The lovely Azema, from Belus sprung,
 Whom thou had'st sav'd from Scythian ravishers,
 Ev'n in that hour of triumph and success,
 Ev'n in the bosom of prosperity,
 The heart of majesty was pierc'd with grief,
 And the throne lost its lustre.

ARSACES.

Azema

Was not to blame; she cou'd not be the cause
 Of sorrow or distress; one look from her
 Wou'd sooth the wrath of gods: but say, my friend,
 Semiramis is still a sov'reign here,
 Her heart is not for ever sunk in grief?

MITRANES.

No: when her noble mind shakes of the burthen,
 Resumes its strength, and shines in native lustre,
 Then we behold in her exalted soul

Pow'rs

Pow'rs that excel whatever flatt'ry's self
 Hath e'er bestow'd on kings; but when she sinks
 Beneath this dreadful malady, loose flow
 The reins of empire, dropping from her hand;
 Then the proud Satrap, fiery Assur, guides
 The helm, and makes the nations groan beneath him:
 The fatal secret never yet hath reach'd
 The walls of Babylon: abroad we still
 Are envy'd, but, alas! we mourn at home.

A R S A C E S.

What lesson of instruction to weak mortals,
 When happiness is mingled thus with woe!
 I too am wretched, thus depriv'd of him
 Whose piercing wisdom best cou'd give me council,
 And lead me through the mazes of a court.
 O I have cause to weep: without a father,
 Left as I am to all the dang'rous passions
 Of heedless youth, without a friendly guide,
 What rocks encompass, and what shoals affright me!

M I T R A N E S.

I weep with thee the loss of him we lov'd,
 The good old man; Phraates was my friend;
 Ninus esteem'd and gave to him the care
 Of Ninias his dear son, our country's hope:

But

But O ! one fatal day destroy'd them both,
 Father and son: to voluntary exile
 Devoted, long he liv'd : his banishment
 Was fortunate to thee, and made thee great :
 Close by his side, in honour's glorious field,
 Arfaces fought, and conquer'd for his country :
 Now, rank'd with princes, thy exalted virtue
 Claims it reward by merit all thy own.

A R S A C E S.

I know not what may be my portion here :
 Perhaps, distinguish'd on Arbazan's plains
 With fair success, my name is not unknown
 On Oxus' banks to great Semiramis :
 When vanquish'd nations paid the homage due,
 From her triumphant carr she drop'd a ray
 Of her own glory on Arfaces' head :
 But oft the soldier, honour'd in the field,
 In courts neglected lies, and is forgotten.
 My father told me in his dying hour
 The fortune of Arfaces here depended
 Upon the common cause ; then gave to me
 These precious relicks, which from ev'ry eye
 He had preserv'd : I must deliver them
 To the high-priest, for he alone can judge,
 And know their value : I must talk with him

S E M I R A M I S.

47

In secret, touching my own fate, for he
Can best conduct me to Semiramis.

M I T R A N E S.

He seldom sees the queen : in solitude
Obscure he lives : his holy ministry
Engrosses all his care ; without ambition,
Fearless, and void of art : is always seen
Within the temple, never at the court :
Never affects the pride of rank and title,
Nor his tiara near the diadem
Immodest wears : the less he seeks for greatness
The more is he admir'd, the more rever'd :
I have access to ev'ry avenue
Of his retirement in this sacred place,
And can this moment talk to him in secret ;
E'er day's too far advanc'd I'll bring him hither.

S C E N E II.

A R S A C E S alone.

Immortal gods ! for what am I reserv'd ?
Make known your will : why did my dying father
Thus send me to the sanctuary, me
A soldier, bred amidst the din of arms ?
A lover too ? How can Arsaces serve
The gods of the Chaldeans ? — Ha ! what voice .

From

From yonder tomb in plaintive accents strikes
 My frighed ear, and makes my hair to stand
 An end with horror ! Near this place I've heard
 The spirit of Ninus dwells — again it shrieks —
 It shocks my soul — Ye dark and dreary caves,
 And thou, the shade of my illustrious master,
 Thou voice of heav'n, what woud'st thou with Arsaces ?

S C E N E III.

A R S A C E S, O R O E S the high-priest, the magi attending
 him, M I T R A N E S.

M I T R A N E S.

[Speaking to Oroes,

He's here, my lord, and waits to give you up
 Those precious relics.

A R S A C E S.

Most reverend father,
 Permit a soldier to approach your presence,
 Pleas'd to fulfil a father's last command,
 One whom you deign'd to love ; thus at your feet,
 Obedient to his will, I here resign them.

O R O E S.

Welcome ! thou brave and noble youth ! that God
 Who governs all, and not a father's will,
 Guided thee here : Phraates was my friend ;
 Dear is his mem'ry to me ; thou shalt know

Perhaps

Perhaps hereafter how I love his son :

Where are the gifts he sent me ?

ARSACES.

[The slaves deliver the coffer to two of the magi, who place it on an altar.

Here, my lord.

O R O E S.

[Opening the coffer, bowing reverentially to it, and seeming greatly affected.

Ye sacred relicks ! do these eyes at length

Behold you ! O I weep for joy to press

These monuments of woe, whilst tears recall

My solemn oath : Mitranes, let no ear

Profane disturb our holy mystery :

We wou'd be private.

[The magi retire.

Mark this seal, Arfaces :

'Tis that which to the laws of Ninus gave

Their public force, and kept the world in awe :

The letter too, which with his dying hand

He wrote : Arfaces, view the wreath that crown'd

His royal brows, and his victorious sword :

The vanquish'd Medes and Persians felt its pow'r ;

It comes at last to vindicate its master,

And to revenge him : useless instrument

Against

Against base treach'ry, and destructive poison,
Whose mortal—

A R S A C E S.

Heaven ! what sayst thou ?

O R O E S.

The dread secret

Hath long been hid in darkness from the eyes
Of men within this sepulchre ; the shade
Of Ninus, and offended heav'n, long time
Have rais'd their voice in vain, and call'd for ven-
geance.

A R S A C E S.

It must be as thou say'st : for know, but now,
Ev'n on this spot, I heard most dreadful groans.

O R O E S.

It was the voice of Ninus.

A R S A C E S.

Twice the noise

Affrighted me.

O R O E S.

T'was he : he calls for vengeance.

A R S A C E S.

He has a right to ask it : but on whom ?

O R O E S.

On the vile murth'ers, whose detested hands
Had of the best of sov'reigns rob'd mankind :

No

No tracks are left behind of the base treason,
But all with him lies bury'd in the tomb :
With ease might they deceive the sons of men,
But not th' all-seeing eye of watchful heav'n,
Which pierces the deep night of human falsehood.

A R S A C E S.

O ! wou'd to heav'n this feeble hand had pow'r
To punish crimes like these ! I know not wherefore,
But when I cast my eyes towards yon tomb,
New horrors rise : O might I consult
That venerable shade, th' inhabitant
Of those dark mansions ?

O R O E S.

No ; it is forbidden :
An oracle severe long since denounc'd
The wrath of heav'n against whoe'er shou'd press
Into this vale of tears, inhabited
By death and the avenging gods : await
With me, Arsaces, for the day of justice :
Soon will it come, and all shall be accomplish'd :
I can no more : sequester'd from the world,
I pray in secret to offended heav'n,
Which, as it wills, commissions me to speak,
Or close my lips in silence : I have said

All that I dare, and all I ought : be careful
 Least in these walls a word, or look, or gesture,
 Betray the secret which the god by me
 Hath trusted with thee ; for on that depends
 His glory, Asia's welfare, and thy life.

Approach, ye magi, hide these sacred relicks
 Beneath the altar.

[The great gate of the palace opens, Assur appears at a
 distance, surrounded with attendants and guards on every
 side.

Ha ! the palace opens :
 The courtiers crouding to the queen : behold
 The haughty Assur with his servile throng
 Of flatt'ers round him ! O almighty pow'r !
 On whom dost thou bestow thy bounties here ?
 O monster !

A R S A C E S.

Ha ! what mean'st thou ?

O R O E S.

Fare thee well :
 When night shall cast her sable mantle o'er
 These guilty walls, I'll have more converse with thee,
 Before the gods : revere them my Arsaces,
 For know, brave youth, their eyes are fix'd on thee.

S C E N E

SCENE IV.

ARSACES, MITRANES, in the front of the stage,
ASSUR, CEDAR, with attendants, on one side.

ARSACES.

His words are dreadful; they affright my soul:
What horrid crimes! and what a court is here!
How little known! my royal master poison'd,
And Assur, but too well I see, suspected!

MITRANES.

Assur is sprung of royal race, and claims
The deference due to his authority:
He is the fav'rite of Semiramis,
And thou, without a blush, may'st pay him homage.

ARSACES.

Homage to him!

ASSUR.

[To Cedar.

Ha! do my eyes deceive me,
Or is Arsaces here without my order?
Amazing insolence!

ARSACES.

What haughtiness!

ASSUR.

[advancing

Come hither, youth: what new engagements here
Have brought you from the camp?

D 2

ARSACES:

ARSACES.

My duty, Sir,
And the queen's orders.

ASSUR.

Did the queen send for you?

ARSACES.

She did.

ASSUR.

But, know you not, with her commands
You shou'd have ask'd for mine?

ARSACES.

I know not that,
And shou'd have thought the honour of her crown
Debas'd by such a mean submission to thee :
My lord, you must forgive a soldier's roughness,
We are bad courtiers : bred up in the plains
Of Arbazan and Scythia, I have serv'd
Your court, but am not much acquainted with it.

ASSUR.

Age, time, and place, perhaps may teach you, Sir,
What wou'd you with the queen ? for know, young
man,

Assur alone can lead you to her presence.

ARSACES.

I come to ask my valour's best reward,
The honour still to serve her.

ASSUR.

A S S U R.

Thou want'st more,
Presumptuous boy ! I know thy bold pretences
To Azema, but that thou woud'st conceal.

A R S A C E S.

Yes : I adore that lovely maid : her heart
Wou'd I prefer to empire : my respect,
My tend'rest love —

A S S U R.

No more : thou know'st not whom
Thou art insulting thus : what ! join the race
Of a Sarmatian to the demi-gods
Of Tigris and Euphrates ! mark me well :
In pity to thy youth I would advise thee
Ne'er, on thy peril, to Semiramis
Impart thy insolent request ; for know,
Rash boy, if thou shou'd'st dare to violate
The rights of Assur, 'twill not pass unpunish'd.

A R S A C E S.

I'll go this instant : thou hast giv'n me courage :
Thus threat'nings always terrify Arsaces :
Thou hast no right, whate'er thy pow'r may be,
T'affront a soldier who has serv'd his queen,
The state, and thee : perhaps my warmth offends ;

D 3

But

But thou art rasher than myself, to think
That I wou'd bend beneath thy servile yoke,
Or tremble at thy pow'r.

A S S U R.

I'll teach thee what a subject may expect
For insolence like this.

A R S A C E S.

We both may learn it.

S C E N E V.

S E M I R A M I S at the further end of the stage,
leaning on her women.

O T A N E S, A S S U R, A R S A C E S, M I T R A N E S, in the front.

O T A N E S, [advancing.

My lord, the queen at present wou'd be private:
You must retire, and give her sorrows way:
Withdraw, ye gods, the hand of vengeance from her!

A R S A C E S.

How I lament her fate!

A S S U R. [To one of his attendants.

Let us begone,
And study how we best may turn her griefs
To our advantage.

[Semiramia comes forward, and is join'd by Otanes.

O T A N E S.

O T A N E S.

* My royal mistress, be yourself again;
And wake once more to joy and happiness.

S E M I R A M I S.

O death! when wilt thou come with friendly shade
To close these eyes that hate the light of day?
Be shut, ye caves; horrible phantom, hence!
Strike if thou wilt, but threaten me no more.
Otanes, is Arsaces come?

O T A N E S.

E'er morn

Rose on the temple, madam, he was there.

S E M I R A M I S.

That dreadful voice, from heav'n or hell I know not,
Which in the dead of night so shakes my soul,
Told me, my sorrows, when Arsaces came,
Wou'd soon be o'er.

O T A N E S.

Rely then on the gods,

And let the chearful ray of hope dispel
This melancholy.

* The beginning of this scene seems awkwardly conducted. Assur, Arsaces, and Mitranes, come in only to go out again: it wou'd, I think, have commenc'd much more properly with this speech of Otanes.

S E M I R A M I S.

Is Arfaces here?

Methinks, when I but hear his name, my soul
Is less disturb'd, and guilt sits lighter on me!

O T A N E S.

O! quit, for ever quit the sad remembrance:
Let the bright days of great Semiramis,
Replete with glory, blot one moment out
That broke the chain of thy ill-fated nuptials:
Had Ninus driv'n thee from his throne and bed,
All Babylon with thee had been destroy'd;
But happily for us, and for mankind,
That wanted such distinguish'd virtues, you
Prevented him; and fifteen years of toil,
Spent in the service of thy country, lands
Desart and waste made fertile by thy care,
The savage tamed, and yeilding to the laws,
The useful arts, obedient to thy voice,
Uprising still, the glorious monuments
Of wealth and pow'r, the wonder of mankind,
And the loud plaudit of a grateful people,
All plead thy cause before the throne of heav'n;
But if impartial justice hold the scale,
If vengeance is requir'd for Ninus' death,

Why

Why thus shou'd Assur brave the angry gods,
And live in peace? He was more guilty far
Than thou wert, yet the ruthless hand that pour'd
The fatal draught ne'er shakes with fear: he feels
No sting of conscience, no remorse affrights him.

S E M I R A M I S.

Our duties diff'rent, diff'rent is our fate:
Where ties are sacred, crimes are heavier far:
I was his wife, Otanes, and I stand
Without excuse; my conscience is my judge
And my accuser: but I hoped the gods,
Offended at my crimes, had punish'd me
Enough, when they dépriv'd me of my child;
Hoped my successful toils, that made the earth
Respect my name, had sooth'd the wrath of heav'n;
But months on months have pass'd in agony
Since this dire spectre hath appall'd my soul:
My eyes for ever see him, and my ears
Still hear his cries: I get me to the tomb,
But dare not enter: trembling I reverē
His ashes, and invoke his honour'd shade,
Which only answers me in dismal groans.
Some dread event is nigh: perhaps the time
Is come to expiate the offence.

D 5

O T A N E S.

But think'st thou

The spirit of thy lord hath left indeed
The mansions of the dead, and stalks abroad ?
Oftimes the soul, by pow'rful fancy led,
Starts at a phantom of its own creation ;
Still it beholds the objects it has made,
And ev'ry thing we fear is present to us.

SEMIRAMIS.

O no ! it was not the wild dream of fancy
By slumber wrought, I saw him but too well :
The stranger sleep had long withheld from me
His sweet delusions ; watchful as I stood,
And mused on my unhappy fate, a voice
Close to my bed, methought, cry'd out, Arfaces !
The name reviv'd me : well thou know'st, long time
Assur has pierc'd this heart with deadly grief :
I shudder at his presence, and the blushes
That shew my guilt increase my punishment,
Hate the reproachful witness of my shame,
And wish I cou'd — but wherefore shou'd I add
To crimes like mine fresh guilt ? I sought Arfaces
To punish Assur, and the thought of him
Awhile reliev'd me ! but in the sweet moment
Of consolation, sudden stood before me

That

That minister of death, all bath'd in blood,
And in his hand a falchion : still I see,
Still hear him : comes he to defend, or punish ?
'Twas at that very hour Arsaces came.
This day was fix'd by heav'n to end my sorrows,
But peace is yet a stranger to my soul,
And hope is lost in horror and despair :
The load of life is grown too heavy for me,
My throne is hateful, and my glories past
But add fresh weight to my calamities.
Long time I've hid my sorrows from the world
And blush'd in secret, fearful to consult
That rev'rend sage whom Babylon adores :
I wou'd not thus degrade the majesty
Of sov'reign pow'r, or let Semiramis
Betray her fears before a mortal's eye,
But I have sent to Lybia's sands in secret
There to consult the oracle of Jove :
As if remov'd from man, the god of truth
Had hid in desert plains his will divine.
Alas ! Otanes, that dread pow'r which dwells
Within these lonely walls, hath long receiv'd
My fears and adorations ; at his altars
My gifts were offer'd, and my incense rose ;
But gifts and incense never can atone

For

For crimes like mine : to-day I shall receive
Answers from Memphis

SCENE VI.

SEMIRAMIS, OTANES, MITRANES.
MITRANES.

An Egyptian priest
Is at the palace gate, and begs admittance.

SEMIRAMIS.

Then will my woes be ended, or complete.
Let us be gone, and hide from Babylon
Her queen's disgraceful sorrows : let Arsaces
Be sent to me : soon may his presence calm
This storm of grief, and sooth my troubled soul !

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II. SCENE I.

ARSACES, AZEMA.

AZEMA.

TO thee, Arsaces, this great empire owes
Its lustre, I my liberty and life.
When vanquish'd Scythia, thirsting for revenge,
From

From its wild defart rush'd indignant forth,
And bore down all before it ; when my father,
Oppress'd by numbers, fell, and left me there
A hapless slave ; then, arm'd with thunder, thou,
Piercing their dark retreats, didst break my chains,
And give me ample vengeance on my foes.
Thou wert my great deliverer, Arsaces,
And in return I give thee all my heart ;
I will be thine, and only thine ; but O !
Our fatal passion will destroy us both :
Thy gen'rous heart, too open and sincere,
Believ'd that gallant deeds, and fair renown
In arms, wou'd gain thee honours in a court ;
And, fearless of success, thou bring'ft with thee
A hero's fierceness and a lover's heart.
Assur's incens'd : alas ! thou dost not know him :
He is too pow'rful for us ; he rules all
At Babylon ; and much, I fear, abuses
His fatal influence o'er Semiramis :
He is thy great inexorable — rival.

A R S A C E S.

Ha ! does he love thee ?

A Z E M A.

No : that savage mind,
Subtle and dark, a foe to ev'ry virtue,

Insensible

Insensible to love and ev'ry charm
But those ambition boasts, cou'd never feel
A real passion for me: but he knows
That Azema's descended from the race
Of our Assyrian kings, and soon may claim
My right of empire here, as next the throne;
And therefore means to blend his int'rest here
With mine, and gain the sceptre for himself:
But if the youth whom Ninus had decreed,
Ev'n from my infant years, to be my husband,
The son of great Semiramis, and heir
Of Babylon, were living now, and here
Wou'd offer me his heart and half his empire,
By love I swear, and by thy precious self,
Ninias shou'd sue in vain, and see me quit
A throne with him for banishment with thee.
Ev'n Scythia's bleak inhospitable plain
Wou'd yield a sweet asylum to our loves;
For they wou'd eccho my Arfaces' name,
And sound his praise: those barren wilds, where first
Our passion grew, wou'd be to me a court,
Nor shou'd I cast a thought on Babylon.

But much I fear this subtle statesman means
To carry his resentment further still:
I've search'd his soul, and know the blackness of it:

Or

Or I mistake, or guilt sits slightly on him ;
Already he is jealous of thy glory,
He fears, and hates thee.

A R S A C E S.

And I hate him more,
But fear him not, since Azema is mine :
Keep thou thy faith, and I despise his anger.
At least I share with him the royal favor :
I saw the queen, and her humanity
Equal'd the pride of Assur : when I fell
Prostrate before her, gently she uprais'd me,
And call'd me the support of Babylon :
With pride I heard the flatt'ring voice of her
Whose name contending kings unite to honour :
The distance 'twixt her royal state and mine
Was lessen'd soon by mildest condescension ;
It touch'd, it melted me ; and, after thee,
To me she seem'd, of all the human race,
Most nearly to resemble the divine.

A Z E M A.

If she protects us, Assur's threats are vain ;
I heed them not.

A R S A C E S.

Inspir'd by thee, I went,
Fearless and brave, to lay before the feet .

Of my great mistress, that aspiring passion
 Which Assur dreads, and Azema approves ;
 When lo, that very moment came a priest
 From Ægypt with Ammonian Jove's decree :
 Trembling she open'd quick the awful scroll,
 First fix'd her eyes on me, then sudden turn'd
 Her face aside, and wept : stood fix'd in grief
 Like one distraught, then sigh'd, and vanish'd from
 me.

They tell me, she is fall'n into despair,
 And hath of late been dreadfully pursued
 By some avenging god : I pity her :
 'Tis wonderful, that after fifteen years,
 Heav'n, that so long defended, shou'd at last
 Oppress her thus : by what hath she offended
 The angry gods, and wherefore are they chang'd ?

A Z E M A.

We hear of nought but dreadful spectres, omens,
 And vengeance from above : the queen of late
 Lets loose the reins of empire : we had cause
 To fear for Babylon, least subtle Assur,
 Who knows her weakness, in this dang'rous time,
 Shou'd seize the helm, and bury all in ruin :
 But the queen came, and all was calm again ;

All

All own'd the pow'r of her despotic sway.
If I have any knowledge of the court,
The queen hates Assur, but keeps fair with him,
And watches close : they're fearful of each other,
Wou'd quarrel soon, but that some secret cause,
Some mutual int'rest, still prevents a rupture :
I saw her fire indignant at his name ;
The blushes on her cheeks betray'd her thoughts,
And her heart seem'd to glow with deep resentment :
But sudden changes happen in a court ;
Return, and speak to her.

A R S A C E S.

I will ; but know not
Whether again I e'er shall gain admittance.

A Z E M A.

Thou hast my vows, my wishes, and my pray'rs
For thy success : I glory in my love,
And in my duty : let Semiramis
Rule o'er the vanquish'd East, I envy her
Nor fame nor conquest ; let the world be hers,
Arsaces mine : but Assur comes this way.

A R S A C E S.

The traitor ! how I shudder at his presence !
My soul abhors him.

S C E N E

SCENE II.

ASSUR, ARSACES, AZEMA.

ASSUR.

Your reception, Sir,
 I find, was noble, such as kings have oft
 Solicited in vain: you saw the queen
 In secret, did she not reprove a conduct
 Injurious to my honour and her own?
 Did she not tell you Azema's design'd
 For Assur, not for thee? Long since her hand
 To Ninias giv'n was for the blood of kings
 Alone reserv'd; and therefore is my right,
 As next to the throne: did she acquaint you, Sir,
 Into what fatal snares your pride wou'd lead you,
 That neither fame nor honours will excuse
 Your bold pretensions?

ARSACES.

I well know what's due
 To your high birth, and to the rank you bear,
 And shou'd have paid it, tho' you had not thus
 Instructed me; but as a master here
 I own you not: your royal ancestors,
 From Belus sprung, perhaps may give you claim
 To Azema; the welfare of the state,

Present

Present and future, all, I own, conspire
To raise your hopes of bliss, and make her yours :
These are your claims, and I acknowledge them :
But I have one that's worth 'em all : I love her :
I might have added this, that I reveng'd
And say'd her, gave new lustre to the throne
Which she was born to fill, if I had chosen,
Like thee, to boast of my exploits before her.
But I must leave thee, to perform her orders,
Semiramis and her I shall obey,
And them alone : a day perhaps may come
When thou shalt be our master : heav'n sometimes
In anger sends us kings : but thou'rt deceiv'd,
At least in one of thy ambitious views,
If 'mongst thy subjects thou hast rank'd Arfaces.

A S S U R.

The measure's full : thou court'st thy own destruction.

S C E N E III.

A S S U R, A Z E M A.

I've borne his insolence too long already,
'Tis time we enter on a nobler subject,
And worthier thy attention.

A Z E M A.

A Z E M A.

Can there be one ?

But speak.

A S S U R.

E'er long all Asia shall attend
 On our resolves, and low concerns like these
 Must pass unheeded by : a world demands
 Our mutual care : Semiramis is now
 The shadow of herself, her glory's past,
 That star which shone with such transcendent lustre,
 Declining now, sends forth a feeble ray ;
 The people see and wonder at her fall,
 Whilst ev'ry tongue demands a——successor :
 That word sufficeth : you well know my right :
 'Tis not for love to deal forth sov'reign pow'r,
 And point out who shall rule in Babylon ;
 Not that my soul, to beauty blind, wou'd make
 A virtue of insensibility ;
 But I shou'd blush for thee and for myself,
 To see the welfare of a nation thus
 Dependant on a sigh : thoughts worthier both
 Must guide my fortune, and determine thine :
 Our ancestors the same, we shou'd offend
 Their venerable shades, and lose the world
 By not uniting : I astonish you :

These

These are harsh words for tender age like thine;
But I address me to the kings and heroes
From whom you sprung, to all those demi-gods
Whom here you represent : too long trod down
Beneath a woman's feet their ashes lay,
Their glories she eclips'd, usurp'd their pow'r,
And fetter'd vanquish'd nations with her laws ;
But she is gone, and thou must now support
The building she has rais'd : she had thy beauty,
And thou must have her courage : let not love
Or folly wrest the sceptre from thy hand,
But grasp it close : you will not sacrifice
To a Sarmatian's idle passion for you
The name you ought to honour, and the throne
You shou'd ascend of universal empire.

A Z E M A.

Let not Arfaces be the theme, my lord,
Of your reproaches, but depend on me
To vindicate the honour of my race,
And to defend, whene'er occasion calls,
The rights of my lov'd ancestors ; I know
Their worth and virtues, but I know not one
Amongst the heroes which Assyria boasts
More great, more virtuous, more belov'd, than him,
Than this Sarmatian, whom you thus disdain.

Do

Do justice to his merit : for myself,
 When I shall bend to Hymen's laws, the queen
 Must guide my choice, and at her hands alone
 Will I receive a master : for the croud,
 The babbling eccho of one secret voice,
 I heed it not ; nor know I if the people
 Are tir'd of their obedience to a woman,
 But still I see them bow the knee before her ;
 And if they murmur, murmur in the dust :
 The hand of heav'n, they say, is rais'd against her :
 I am a stranger to her guilt, but think
 That heav'n wou'd never have made choice of thee
 To tell its high commands, or minister
 Its justice to mankind : Semiramis
 Is still a queen, and you who lord it here
 Receive from her the laws which you dispense :
 For me, I own her pow'r, and her's alone :
 My glory's to obey, be thine the same.

S C E N E IV.

A S S Ū R, C E D A R.

Obey ! I blush to think how long already
 I have obey'd : O insupportable !
 But say, hast thou succeeded, are the seeds
 Of hatred sown in secret thro' the realm ?

Will

Will they spring up into a fruitful harvest
Of discord and rebellion ?

C E D A R.

All is well :

The people, long deluded by the arts
And dazzling glory of Semiramis,
At length have lost their idle veneration :
No longer chain'd to silence, they demand
A successor : each lover of his country
Calls for a master, and looks up to thee.

A S S U R.

Heart-burning care ! and ever-during shame !
Still must my hopes, my fate depend on her ?
Was it for this that Ninus and his son
Fell by my hand, that Assur might be still
Only her first of slaves ? So near the throne,
To languish in illustrious servitude,
And only be the second of mankind !
The queen was satisfy'd with Ninus' death,
But I went further, and pursued my blow :
Ninias, in secret murder'd by my order,
Open'd my passage to the throne ; but she
Deny'd me entrance. — A long time in vain
I sooth'd her pride with flatt'ry on her charms ;

Still

Still hoped one day to gain upon her youth
That happy influence which assiduous care
And humble adoration seldom fail
To win o'er artless minds that bend with ease :
I little knew the firmness of her soul,
Inflexible, and bold ; the world alone
Cou'd satisfy her pride : she seem'd indeed
Most worthy of it : spite of my resentment,
I own she was, and yield the praise she merits.
The reins of empire, that flow'd loose before,
Strongly she held ; appeas'd the murm'ring croud,
Silenc'd their complaints, and quash'd conspiring rebels ;
Fought like a hero, like a monarch rul'd :
She led her army and her people captive,
And spite of fame, with more than magic art,
Chain'd down the minds of men : the universe
Astonish'd stood, and trembled at her feet,
In short, her beauty, woman's best support,
Strengthen'd the laws which pow'r and valour made ;
And when I strove to raise conspiracies
My friends stood mute, and only cou'd admire her.

At length the charm is broke : her pow'r decays ;
Her genius droops ; remorse and idle fears,
And fond credulity have bound her faith
To lying oracles, which knavish priests

Had

Had taught to speak in Ægypt's barren plain :
 She pours her daily incense at their altars,
 And wearies Heav'n with vows : Semiramis
 Creeps on a level now with common mortals,
 And condescends to fear : I know her weakness :
 Know, till she falls, Assur can never rise :
 But I have rais'd the people's voice against her,
 And she must yield : this blow decides her fate :
 If she consents to give me Azema,
 She is no longer queen ; if she refuses,
 The kingdom will revolt : on every side
 The snare is laid, and nothing now can save her.
 Yet, after all, perhaps I am deceiv'd,
 And fortune, so long call'd for, comes at last
 But to betray me.

C E D A R.

If the queen is forc'd
 To name a successor, and yield the princess
 To Assur's bed, what can he have to fear,
 When the divided branch of Asia's kings
 Shall be united ? all conspires to pave
 Your way to empire.

A S S U R.

Azema is safe ;

She must be mine ; but wherefore send so far
 For this Arfaces ? she supports him too ;

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E

And

And when I wou'd chastise his insolence,
 Her interposing hand prevents me still :
 A minister without the pow'r, a prince
 Without a subject, girt around with honours,
 And yet a poor dependant, what is Assur ?
 All, all unite to persecute me now :
 A peevish mistress, and a haughty rival,
 Consulted priests that teach their gods to speak
 Against me ; with Semiramis, who strives
 To free herself, yet trembles at my presence :
 But we shall see how far this proud ingrate
 Will urge an angry rebel who defies her.

S C E N E V.

A S S U R, O T A N E S, C E D A R.

O T A N E S.

My lord, the queen commands you to attend her
 In secret, and alone.

A S S U R.

I shall obey
 Her sacred orders, and with care perform
 My sov'reign's will.

S C E N E

S C E N E VI.

A S S U R, C E D A R.

A S S U R.

Whence springs this sudden change ?

These three months past she has avoided me,
Ev'n as the object of her hatred : oft
When she beheld me she wou'd cast her eyes
Down on the earth, as if she loath'd the sight :
Whene'er we met, 'twas in a gaping croud
Of hearers ; when she spoke, her sighs and tears
Wou'd interrupt our converse, or perchance
Silence was all the answer she wou'd give me,
What can she want ? What can she say to me ?
But here she comes : 'tis she—wait you within.

[to Cedar.

S C E N E VII.

S E M I R A M I S, A S S U R.

S E M I R A M I S.

My lord, I come to ease a troubled heart
Of its long hidden woes, and pour it all
Before you : I have ruled o'er Asia long,
And not inglorious : Babylon perhaps
May pay this tribute to my memory,
And say, Semiramis deserv'd to rank

E 2

Among

Among the greatest of her kings : thy hands
 Have help'd me to support the weight of empire ;
 With absolute dominion have I ruled,
 Ador'd by all, and crown'd with victory
 On ev'ry side : intoxicated long
 With flatt'ry's pleasing incense, I forgot
 The crimes that rais'd me to this envy'd state ;
 Forgot the justice of high heav'n : it comes ;
 It speaks to me : Semiramis must yield :
 This noble structure, which I fondly thought
 Superior to the injuries of time,
 Is tott'ring now, and shakes from its foundation ;
 Means must be found to strengthen and support it.

A S S U R.

The work is yours, and you must finish it :
 Foresee th' attacks of time, and stop his rapine :
 Who shall obscure the lustre of thy days,
 Or wherefore fear'st thou heav'n whilst earth obeys
 thee ?

S E M I R A M I S.

Yonder the ashes of my husband lie ;
 Can'st thou look there, and wonder at my fears ?

A S S U R.

I cannot bear to hear the noisy croud
 Still talk of Ninus : wherefore shou'd remembrance

Call

Call back the thoughts of that inglorious reign?
 Can they believe, that, after fifteen years,
 His angry spirit still calls out for justice?
 E'er now he wou'd have ta'en due vengeance on us,
 Had he the pow'r : why from the peaceful realms
 Of dark oblivion wou'dst thou call the dead,
 Or search for truth in lying oracles?
 I am astonish'd too, but 'tis at thee,
 And thy vain fears : to make the gods propitious,
 We must be resolute : this idle phantom,
 At once the child and parent of your fears,
 Why shou'd it thus alarm you? Prodigies
 Never appear to those who dread them not :
 Baits to allure th' unthinking multitude,
 By knaves invented, and by fools believ'd ;
 The great despise them : but if nobler views
 Inspire thy soul t'immortalize the blood
 Of Belus, if the beauteous Azema
 Claims her high rank. —

S E M I R A M I S.

Affur, on that I came
 To speak with thee : our Babylon demands,
 For such is Ammon's will, a successor :
 Heav'n and my people will be satisfy'd

When I shall take a partner to my throne :
Thou know'st, my pride cou'd never condescend
To a divided sway ; 'twas my resolve
To rule alone, whilst the impatient world
Urg'd me in vain ; and when the peoples voice,
Which now is eccho'd by the voice of heav'n,
Still press'd me, in the bloom of youth, to give
A sov'reign to mankind, I still refus'd :
If I had yielded then to any claim,
It had been thine ; you had a right to hope,
And to expect it ; but you knew too well,
How much Semiramis abhorr'd a master.
Without submitting to a tie so fatal,
I made thee then the second of mankind,
And only not my equal ; 'twas enough,
I thought, to satisfy ev'n thy ambition.
At length the gods make known their will divine,
And I obey them : hear the oracle :
“ All shall again be well at Babylon,
“ When Hymen's torch a second time shall blaze
“ Propitious ; then shalt thou, O cruel wife,
“ And wretched mother, then shall thou appease
“ The shade of Ninus.” Thus the voice of heav'n
Declares its sacred will : I know thy arts,
Know, thou hast form'd a party in the state,

And

And mean t'oppose me with the royal blood
From whence you sprung : from thee and Azema
My successor, it seems, must rise ; I know
You look that way, and she perhaps aspires
To equal honours ; but, observe me well :
I shall not suffer your united claims
To rob me of my right : remember, Sir,
You know my will ; 'tis constant, and as fate
Irrevocable : think'st thou now the God
Whose arms is lifted o'er me hath depriv'd
My soul of all its wanted strength and spirit,
Or dost thou still behold Semiramis,
Who can support the honour of her throne ?
Know, Babylon e'er long shall at my hands
Receive a master : whether the high choice
Shall fall on thee, or be another's lot,
I'll take a sov'reign as a sov'reign ought :
Bring me the magi and the princes here
To join their voices with Semiramis,
To give away my freedom and my empire
Is the first greatest act of royal pow'r,
And therefore let it be perform'd with awe
And silence due to my authority.
Heav'n hath appointed this great day to shew
Its mercy to me, and the gods at length

Remit their anger ; nothing can disarm it
 But my repentance ; 'tis the only virtue :
 Trust me, it is, howe'er you may despise it,
 Remaining for the guilty : weak, I know,
 And fearful thou esteem'st me ; but henceforth
 Remember, Assur, guilt alone is weakness :
 Think not that fear can e'er disgrace a throne,
 It has done good to kings, and might to thee :
 I tell thee, statesman, to obey the gods,
 * And tremble at their pow'r, is no abasement.

S C E N E VIII.

A S S U R alone.

Astonishment ! such language, such designs !
 Or is it artifice, or weakness in her,
 Or cowardice or courage ? Does she mean,
 By yielding thus, to prop her tott'ring pow'r,
 And by our union to defeat my purpose ?
 I must not think, it seems, of Azema,

* The enormous length of this speech, is a sufficient proof of what Mr. Voltaire has advanc'd in the preface, viz. that most of the French tragedies are nothing but long discourses : this consists of no less than sixty-four lines, and is enough to tire the pipe of the most long-winded actor. Semiramis, however, has beauties, which few of them have, to make amends for the tediousness of declamation, which in other writers, and even sometimes in Voltaire, is insupportable.

Because,

Because, perhaps, I'm destin'd for herself.
 It must be so. What all my cares in vain
 Solicited, my flatt'ry of her charms,
 My deep intrigues, and our united crimes,
 With all her fears, cou'd never gain, at length
 An idle dream, and a dark oracle
 From Ægypt have perform'd. What pow'r unknown
 Decrees the fate of mortals? Great events
 Hang on the slend'rest thread: still I am doubtful:
 I'll see Semiramis again; she seem'd
 Too much in haste; such sudden resolutions
 Betray an over anxious mind, and those
 Who change with ease are either weak, or wicked.

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

S E M I R A M I S, O T A N E S.

The scene represents an apartment in the place.

S E M I R A M I S.

Who wou'd have thought, Otanes, that the gods,
 Offended as they were, at length shou'd smile
 Propitious thus, and threaten but to save!
 Shou'd drop th'uplifted thunder from their hand,
 And pardon me; shou'd send Arfaces hither

E 5

To

To change my fate ! for know it is their will
 That I shou'd wed, and by a second tie
 Expiate the crimes of my first fatal nuptials.
 They are the great disposers of our hearts,
 And mine with pleasure yields to their decrees :
 It ev'n outruns their purposes : Arfaces,
 I'm thine ; for thou wert born to rule o'er me,
 And o'er the world.

O T A N E S.

Arfaces ! he !

S E M I R A M I S.

Thou know'st,

In Scythia's plains, when I reveng'd the Persian,
 And conquer'd Asia, this young hero fought
 Beneath his father's banners, and surrounded
 With captives, brought to me the bloody spoils,
 And, blushing, laid his victims at my feet.
 When first I saw him, I cou'd feel his heart,
 As by some secret pow'r, attracting mine
 Insensibly towards him ; all mankind,
 Beside Arfaces, seem'd not worth my notice.
 Assur grew jealous of him, and e'er since
 Has fir'd with indignation at his name ;
 Whilst his dear image still employ'd my thoughts,
 Before that voice which guides my ev'ry word

And

And ev'ry action named him for my husband,
Before the gods had pointed out Arfaces.

O T A N E S.

It was indeed a noble conquest, thus
To bend that haughty spirit which disdain'd
The proffer'd homage of our eastern monarchs,
Who as her subjects, not as lovers, still
Accepted kings ! You who contemn'd those charms,
That sov'reign beauty, which extended wide
Your universal empire ; whilst your eyes
Pierc'd ev'ry heart, you scarce wou'd condescend
To mark their pow'r ; and dost thou yield at last
To love's imperious sway ; to fears and horror
Succeed the tender passions ? Can it be ?

S E M I R A M I S.

O, no : it is not love : I am not fall'n
So much beneath myself, as to bestow
On beauty the reward that's due to virtue ;
I feel a nobler passion in my breast :
Alas ! such weakness wou'd but ill become
Semiramis : unhappy as I am,
For me to think of love, Otanes, how
Coud'st thou suppose it ? Once I was a mother,
But scarce had study'd to deserve the name
By my fond cares, when heav'n in anger snatch'd

My

My child away, and left me here alone
A prey to anguish. I had nothing near me
That I cou'd love ; and, midst my grandeur, felt
An aching void within my soul. I fled
The court, endeavour'd to avoid myself,
And sought relief in these proud monuments,
Amusing flatt'ers of a restless heart
That shunn'd reflection : rest was still a stranger,
And long remain'd so ; but he comes once more,
I feel him now, and wonder at the pow'r
That charm'd him hither : 'twas Arsaces ; he
Shall hold the place of husband and of son,
A conquer'd world, and all my glories past.
How much I owe to thee, cœlestial pow'r,
Who thus propitious lead'st me to the altar
So long abhorr'd ; and hast thyself inspir'd
That passion which alone can make me happy !

O T A N E S.

But what will be the rage and grief of Assur ?
Hast thou reflected on it, when he hears
Thy new resolves ? He is not without hopes :
The people have already fix'd thy choice
On him, and his resentment will not end
In mere complaints.

S E M I-

S E M I R A M I S.

I never have deceiv'd

And therefore fear him not : these fifteen years,
Whate'er his views have been, I've taught him still
To rank but with my subjects, tho' the first
Amongst them ; and set bounds to his ambition,
Which he hath ne'er o'erleap'd : I reign'd alone ;
And if this feeble hand so long cou'd guide
The helm of pow'r, and curb his haughtiness,
What can his courage or his cunning do
Against Arfaces and Semiramis ?

Yes : Ninus hath accepted my repentance,
And leaves the mansions of the dead to urge
Our happy union : his illustrious shade
Again wou'd rage to see his murth'rer seize
His throne and bed : this calls him from the tomb,
And Ammon's oracles unite with him
To crown my blifs : no more the awful virtue
Of Oroes affrights me ; I've sent for him
To be a witness of the great event,
And soon expect him here.

O T A N E S.

His honour'd name

And sacred character may give indeed
A sanction to your choice.

S E M I-

S E M I R A M I S.

I know it will,

And 'stablish my resolves.

O T A N E S.

Behold, he comes.

S C E N E II.

S E M I R A M I S, O R O E S.

S E M I R A M I S.

Great successor of Zoroastres, welcome:

To day must Babylon receive a king;

Thy office is to crown him; is all ready

For the solemnity?

O R O E S.

The magi wait

Thy pleasure, and the nobles all attend:

To pay obedience to the sov'reign pow'r

Is all my duty, and I shall fulfill it:

I am not to judge kings, for that belongs

To heav'n alone.

S E M I R A M I S.

By this mysterious language,

It seems you disapprove my purpose.

O R O E S.

Madam,

I know it not, but wish it fair success.

S E M I-

S E M I R A M I S.

Thou can'st interpret heav'n's high will : these signs
Which I have seen, can they be fatal to me ?
A spectre hath of late, perhaps some god,
Appear'd, and in the bosom of the earth
Re-enter'd soon : what pow'r hath thus broke down
Th' eternal barrier that divides the light
From darkness? wherefore shou'd a mortal thus
Rise from the tomb to visit me ?

O R O E S.

Know, heav'n

Doth oft suspend its own eternal laws
When justice bids, reversing death's decree ;
Thus to chastise the sov'reigns of the earth,
And terrify mankind.

S E M I R A M I S.

The oracles

Demand a sacrifice.

O R O E S.

It shall be offer'd.

S E M I R A M I S.

Eternal justice, thou whose piercing eye
Behold'st my naked heart, O fill it not
Again with horror, bury in oblivion
My first unhappy nuptials !

Oroes,

S E M I R A M I S.

Oroes, stay.

[To Oroes, who is retiring,

O R O E S.

[returning,

I thought my presence might disturb you, Madam.

S E M I R A M I S.

Return, and answer me: this morning, say,
Did not Arsaces offer at your altars
Gifts to the gods?

O R O E S.

He did; and precious were they:
Arsaces is the favourite of heav'n.

S E M I R A M I S.

I know he is, and I rejoice to hear it.
Can I be wretched if I trust to him?

O R O E S.

He is the empire's best support; the gods
Conducted him; his glory is their care.

S E M I R A M I S.

With transport I accept the fair presage,
• Whilst hope and peace return to calm my breast.
Away: again let purest incense rise
Before your altars; let your magi come
And sanctify the choice; bring down the smiles

Of

Of the assenting gods, and make us happy.
Henceforth may Babylon with me revive,
And shine amongst the nations of the earth
With double splendor ! Go thou, and prepare
The solemn pomp.

S C E N E III.

S E M I R A M I S, O T A N E S.

S E M I R A M I S.

Heav'n second my design,

And I am only the interpreter
Of its high will, to give the world a master :
Thus to receive a kingdom at my hand
Will strike him with astonishment : ev'n now
How little thinks he of th' approaching greatness !
How will proud Assur and his fawning croud
Be humbled ! But a word, and whole earth
Falls at his feet ; and, grateful as he is,
I know he will repay me : I shall wed him,
And for my portion carry him a world ;
My glory's pure, and now I shall enjoy it.

S C E N E

SCENE IV.

SEMIRAMIS, OTANES, MITRANES.

An officer of the palace.

OTANES.

Arfaces begs admittance to your presence,
To lay his sorrows at your feet.

SEMIRAMIS.

Arfaces !

What sorrows can Arfaces feel when I
Am near him, he who thus hath banish'd mine ?
Quick, let him come : he knows not yet his pow'r
O'er the fond heart of Semiramis :
O thou dread shade whose voice alarm'd my soul,
Whose blood no more calls out for vengeance on me,
And you, the guardian gods of this great empire,
Of the Assyrians, Ninus, and my son,
Unite to bless Arfaces ! Ha ! the sight
Alarms me ; whence can these strange terrors rise ?

SCENE V.

SEMIRAMIS, ARSACES.

O queen, I am devoted to thy service ;
My life is thine ; and when I shed this blood,
I am rewarded if it flow for thee.
My father had some small renown in arms ;

I saw him perish bravely in the field,
 And at the head of thy victorious bands ;
 He left his hapless son a fair example,
 Perhaps but ill pursued : I'll not recall
 The mem'ry of my father's services,
 'Twou'd ill become me ; at your royal knees,
 Tho' here I sue for favor and protection :
 Pity the rashness of a guilty youth,
 Who listen'd to the dictates of imprudence,
 And ev'n in serving fear'd he might offend you.

S E M I R A M I S.

Offend me ! thou, Arsaces ! fear it not.

A R S A C E S.

To day you give your kingdom and your hand :
 My heart, I know, shou'd on the great event
 Keep secret all its fears, and humbly still
 In silence, with depending monarchs, wait
 To know our master ; but his Assur steps
 So haughtily, and triumphs in his conquest,
 We cannot brook his pride : the people call him
 Already their new sov'reign ; his high blood
 And rank support him : may he prove himself
 Worthy of both ! but I have still a soul
 To proud to bend beneath him, or adore

The

The pow'r I had defy'd: his jealous heart
 I know detests Arfaces: let me then
 Retire in safety, far from him, and thee:
 Permit me to revisit the dear climes
 Where first I serv'd my royal mistress, there
 His tyranny can never reach: perhaps
 I may hereafter —

S E M I R A M I S.

Wilt thou leave me then,
 And fear'st thou Assur?

A R S A C E S.

No: Arfaces fears
 Nought but the anger of Semiramis.
 Perhaps thou know'st my fond ambition, then
 I've cause indeed to tremble.

S E M I R A M I S.

Hope the best,
 And know that Assur ne'er shall be thy master.

A R S A C E S.

I own it shock'd my soul to look on him
 As Ninus' successor: but is he then
 Design'd for Azema? forgive this bold
 Presumptuous questioner: long since I know
 She was to Ninias giv'n, proud Assur sprung

From

From the same race, and claims her as his own:

I am but a poor subject, yet I dare——

S E M I R A M I S.

Such subjects are my kingdom's best support;

I know thee well; thy noble soul, superior

To vulgar minds, hath sought Semiramis,

Not for her fortunes, but herself; thy eyes

Are fix'd on her true int'rest, and on thee

I shall depend: Assur and Azema

Shall never meet; their union would be dang'rous:

But their designs are known, and by my care

Will be prevented.

A R S A C E S.

Since my heart at length

I open to thee, and thou hast discover'd——

A Z E M A enters suddenly, and throws herself at the feet of
Semiramis.

O Queen, permit me thus——

S E M I R A M I S

Rise, Azema:

Where'er my choice may light, thou may'st depend

On my protection, and shalt find respect

Due to thy birth; for, destin'd as thou wert

To be the wife of my lamented son,

I look upon thee with a mother's eye:

[To

[To them both]

Go, place yourselves with those whom I have call'd
To witness my resolves, and mark my choice.

[To Arfaxes]

Be thou, my best protector, near the throne.

SCENE VI.

The apartment of Semiramis opens into a magnificent saloon richly ornamented; a number of officers in their proper habits on the steps of the throne which is rais'd in the middle; the satraps on each side: the high-priest enters with the magi, and places himself between Assur and Arfaxes: the queen in the midst with Azema, and her attendants: guards at the lower end of the saloon.

O R O E S.

Ye princes, magi, warriors, the support
Of Babylon, assembled by command
From great Semiramis, the will of heav'n
Soon shall ye know: the gods that guard our empire
Have fix'd on this important hour to work
A great and mighty change; whoe'er the queen
Shall here appoint her sov'reign and our own
It is our duty to obey; and here
I bring my tribute to the throne, my pray'rs

Ar

And wishes for the glory and the welfare
Of them, and of their kingdom : may these days
Of joy and gladness ne'er be chang'd to hours
Of grief and sorrow, nor these songs of mirth
To mournful plaints !

A-Z E M A.

A king, my lords, will soon
Be named ; whoe'er he be, the choice will injure
Myself alone ; but Azema was born
And must remain a subject ; I submit
To the queen's pleasure, and on her protection
Shall still depend ; nor with the dark presage
Of future ills shall interrupt your joy :
But leave you my example of obedience.

A S S U R.

Howe'r the queen may chose, and heav'n determine,
We must consult the public good alone ;
Let us then swear by this imperial throne,
And great Semiramis, to yeild submissive,
And without murm'ring, to obey her will.

A R S A C E S.

I swear it ; and this arm that fought for her,
This heart obedient ever to her voice,
Which next the voice of heav'n I still rever'd,

This

This blood which flow'd with pleasure for her sake,
 Shall be devoted to that royal master
 Whom she appoints.

H I G H - P R I E S T.

I wait the great award
 Of heaven and Semiramis

S E M I R A M I S.

Enough :

Each to his place, and now attend, my people.

(She seats herself on the throne.)

Azema, Assur, the High-Priest, and Arfaces take their places,
 and she proceeds:

If in that hand which custom and the laws
 Of an imperious husband had confin'd
 To homely cares, and to a distaff chain'd,
 I bore aloft the sceptre and the sword,
 Beyond my subjects hope, nor sunk beneath
 The weight of empire, let me now extend
 To latest times its glory : 'tis my purpose
 This day to take a partner in the throne :
 The gods must be obey'd, whose dread command
 At length subdued my long unconquer'd heart :
 They who depriv'd me of my son, perhaps
 May one day raise an heir to Babylon
 Worthy of empire, who shall follow me

Thro'

Thro' all the thorny paths that I have trod,
Finish my work, and make my reign immortal.
I might have chose a fov'reign from the kings
That dwell around me, but the're all my foes,
Or tributary slaves: a foreign hand
Shall never wield this sceptre: my own subjects
Are better than the kings which they have conquer'd:
Belus was born a subject; if he gain'd
The diadem, he ow'd it to the people,
And to himself: by rights like his I hold
The pow'r supreme; and, mistress of a kingdom
Larger than his, have bent beneath my yoke
The nations of the East, which Belus ne'er
Had seen or heard of: what he but attempted
Semiramis perform'd; for they who found
A kingdom, and they only, can preserve it.
You want a king who may be worthy of you,
Worthy of such an empire, shall I add
Worthy the hand that crowns him, and the heart
Which I shall give: I have consulted heav'n,
My country's weal, the int'rest of mankind,
And choose a king to make the world more happy.
Adore the hero, see in him reviv'd
The princes of my honour'd race; observe him,

And know, this king, this hero, is — Arfaces.

[She descends from the throne, and they all rise.

A Z E M A.

Arfaces ! the perfidious——

A S S U R.

Rage and vengeance !

A R S A C E S.

Believe me, Azema——

O R O E S.

Just heav'n ! avert

These omens !

S E M I R A M I S.

Thou who sanctify'st my choice,
Confirm it at the altar : see in him
Ninus and Ninias both restor'd.

[It thunders, and the tomb shakes,

O heav'n !

What do I hear ?

O R O E S.

Great gods, protect us now !

S E M I R A M I S.

The thunder comes, in anger or in love
I know not : pardon, gracious gods ! Arfaces
Must win them to forgiveness. Ha ! what voice

Distracts

SEMIRAMIS.

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Distracts me thus ? and see, the tomb is open.
O heav'n ! I die.

[The ghost of Ninus comes out of the tomb,

ASSUR.

The shade of Ninus' self.

Gods ! is it possible ?

ARSACES.

What say'st thou ? speak,
Thou god of terrors.

ASSUR.

O unfold thy tale.

SEMIRAMIS.

Com'st thou to pardon, or to punish me ?
It is thy sceptre and thy bed which here
I have bestow'd : speak, is he worthy of it ?
Determine : I obey thee.

The GHOST of NINUS to ARSACES.

Thou shalt reign,
Arsaces, but there are some dreadful crimes
Which thou must expiate : hie thee to the tomb,
And to my ashes offer sacrifice :
Serve me and Ninias : remember well
Thy father : listen to the pontiff.

F 2

ARSACES.

A R S A C E S.

O !

Thou venerable shade, thou demi-god,
 Who dwell'st within these walls, the sight of thee
 Inspires but not astonishes Arsaces :
 Yes, I will go, on peril of my life,
 And meet thee in the tomb : but tell me, what
 Must be the sacrifice ? O speak ! he's gone.

[The ghost retires towards the entrance of the mausolæum.

S E M I R A M I S.

Thou honour'd spirit of my lord, permit me
 Thus on my knees to pour my sorrows forth,
 Permit me in the tomb to — —

GHOST, at the entrance of the tomb.

Stop : no farther :

Respect my ashes : when the time is come
 I'll send for thee.

[The ghost goes into the tomb, and the mausolæum closes.

A S S U R.

Amazing !

S E M I R A M I S.

Follow me,

My people, to the temple : be not thus
 Dismay'd : for know, the gentle shade of Ninus

Is

Is not implacable ; it loves your king;
 And therefore will it spare Semiramis :
 Heav'n that inspir'd my choice will now support it :
 Haste then, and pray for me, and for Arsaces.

END of the THIRD ACT.

A C T IV. S C E N E I.

Representing the porch of the temple.

A R S A C E S, A Z E M A.

A R S A C E S.

DO not oppress me in this hour of grief,
 And aggravate my sorrows ; I have borne
 Enough already : this dread oracle
 Affrights me ; prodigies on ev'ry side
 Disturb the course of nature : heav'n deprives me
 Of all, if Azema is lost.

A Z E M A.

No more,
 False man, nor to the horrors of this day
 Add the remembrance of thy perfidy ;
 No more the terrors of Semiramis,

The walking spectre, and the opening grave,
 Appall me now ; of all the prodigies
 Which I have seen, thy base inconstancy
 Hath shock'd me most : go on, appease the shade
 Of Ninus, and begin the sacrifice
 With Azema ; behold, and strike the victim.

A R S A C E S.

It is too much ; my heart was not prepar'd
 Against this cruel stroke : thou know'st, my soul
 Prefers thee to the empire of the world :
 What was the object of that fame in arms
 I held so dear, of all my victories ?
 All my ambition hoped for was at last
 To merit thee : Semiramis, thou know'st,
 Was dear to both ; thy tongue unites with mine
 To praise her ; she was still the guardian god
 That cherish'd and protected us ; as such
 We both revered her with that pious zeal
 And chaste regard which mortals bear to heav'n :
 Judge of my spotless faith by my surprise
 At the queen's choice, and mark the precipice
 It leads us to, thence learn our future fate.

A Z E M A.

I know it.

A R S A C E S.

A R S A C E S.

Learn, that neither thou nor empire
Were destin'd for Arsaces; know, that son
Whom I must serve, the child of Ninus, he
Who must inherit here——

A Z E M A.

Well; what of him?

A R S A C E S.

That Ninias, he who from his cradle lit
The torch of Hymen with thee, who was born.
My rival and my master——

A Z E M A.

Ninias!

A R S A C E S.

Lives;

And will be with us soon.

A Z E M A.

Ha! then the queen ——

A R S A C E S.

Ev'n to this day deceiv'd, laments his death.

A Z E M A.

Ninias alive!

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A R S A C E S.

ARSACES.

It is a secret yet
Within the temple, and she knows it not.

AZEMA.

But Ninias crowns thee, and his widow's thine.

ARSACES.

Ay, but his son was born for Azema ;
He is my king, so says the oracle,
And I must serve him.

AZEMA.

But love claims his own,
And will be heard in spite of all, Arsaces :
His orders are not doubtful, or obscure.
Love is my oracle, and that alone
Shall be obey'd. Ninias, thou say'st, yet liyes,
Let him appear, and let Semiramis
Recall her plighted faith to him ; let Ninus
Rise from the tomb, to join the fatal knot
Made in our infant years ; let Ninias come,
My king, thy master, and thy rival, fired
With all the love which once Arsaces had
For Azema, then see how I will slight
His proffer'd vows ; then shalt thou see me scorn

The

The sceptre at my feet, and spurn a crown
Which is my due : where is he now ? What secret,
What myst'ry veils him from us ? Let him come ;
But know, nor Ninias, nor Semiramis,
No, nor the sacred spirit of his father
Ris'n from the tomb, not all the pow'rs of nature
Thrown in confusion, from my heart shou'd wrest
The image of my perjur'd dear Arsaces :
Go, ask thy own, if it will dare to act
As mine hath done. . What are those dreadful crimes
Which thou must expiate ? if thou e'er shoud'st break
The sacred tie that binds us, if thou'rt false,
I know no crime, no treach'ry like thy own.

I see the sage interpreter of fate
This way advancing ; love will never plead
Thy cause with heav'n, if thou betray'st me : go,
From Ninus' hand receive thy doom ; remember,
Thy fate depends on heav'n, and mine on thee.

[Exit Azema.

A R S A C E S.

Arsaces still is thine : stay, cruel maid :
How mingled is our happiness and woe !
What strange events that contradict each other ——

S C E N E II.

ARSACES, OROES, the magi attending.

OROES.

[To Arsaces.]

Let us retire to yonder lonely walk ;
I see you are much mov'd : prepare yourself
For strokes more dreadful.

[To the magi.]

Bring the royal wreath.

[The magi bring the coffer.]

This letter, and this sacred sword, to thee,
Arsaces, I deliver.

ARSACES.

Rev'rend father,

Wilt thou not save me from the precipice
That gapes before me ? wilt thou not at length
Uplift the veil, that from my eyes conceals
My future fate ?

OROES.

'Twill be remov'd, my son ;
The hour is come, when in his dreary mansions,
Ninus from thee expects a sacrifice
That shall appease his angry spirit.

ARSACES.

What

Can Ninus ask, what sacrifice from me ?

Must

Must I be his avenger, when his son
Still lives? Let Ninias come; he is my king,
And I will serve him.

O R O E S.

'Tis his father's will,
Thou must obey him: an hour hence, Arsaces,
Be at his tomb, arm'd with this sacred sword,
And with this wreath adorn'd, which Ninus wore,
And which thyself did bring to me.

A R S A C E S.

The wreath
Of Ninus!

O R O E S.

'Tis his royal will that thus
Thou shoud'st appear, to offer up the blood
That must be shed; the victim will be there:
Strike thou, and leave the rest to him, and heav'n.

A R S A C E S.

If he requires my life, I'll give it him:
But where is Ninias? thou speak'st nought of him:
Thou hast not told me how his father gives
To me his kingdom and his queen.

O R O E S.

To thee
His queen! O heav'n, to thee Semiramis

Be

Be giv'n! Arsaces, the important hour
Which I had promis'd thee is come, when thou
Shalt know thy fate, and this abandon'd woman.

A R S A C E S.

Great gods!

O R O E S.

'Twas she who murder'd Ninus.

A R S A C E S.

She,

Saidst thou, the queen?

O R O E S.

Affur, that foul disgrace
Of human nature, Affur gave the poison.

A R S A C E S.

I'm not surpris'd at Affur's cruelty,
But that a wife, a queen, and such a queen,
The pride of sov'reigns, the delight of nations,
That she shou'd e'er be guilty of a crime
So horrible! it passes all belief.
How can such virtues and such guilt as hers
Subsist together!

O R O E S.

How indeed! the question
Is worthy of thy noble heart: but now

'Twere

'Twere needless to dissemble, ev'ry moment
Is big with some new secret, horrible
To nature, who already whispers to thee
Her soft complaints; thy gen'rous heart, I see,
Spite of thy self, is shock'd, and mourns within thee;
But wonder not that Ninus from the tomb
Indignant rises on this seat of guilt;
He comes to break the horrid nuptial tie,
Wov'n by the furies, and expose to light
Unpunish'd crimes; to save his son from incest:
He speaks to, he expects thee: know thy father,
For thou art Ninias, and the queen's thy mother.

A R S A C E S.

Thou hast o'er pow'rd me in one dreadful moment
With such repeated wonders, that I stand
Astonish'd, and the night of death surrounds me.
Am I his son, and can it be?

O R O E S.

Thou art:

Ninus, the morn before he dy'd, foresaw
His end approaching; knew the deadly draught
Which he drank was minister'd to thee
By the same hand, and, dying as thou wert,
Withdrew thee from this wicked court: for Assur
Had poison'd thee that he might wed thy mother,
Thought

Thought to exterminate the royal race,
 And open thus his passage to the throne :
 But whilst the kingdom mourn'd thy loss, Phradates,
 Our faithful friend, secreted and preserv'd thee ;
 With skilful hand the precious herbs prepar'd,
 O'er Persia spread by her benignant God,
 Whose wond'rous pow'r drew forth the latent venom
 From thy parch'd limbs : his own son dying, you
 Supply'd his place, and still wert call'd Arsaces.
 He waited patient for some lucky change,
 But the great judge of kings had otherwise
 Determin'd ; truth at length descends from heav'n,
 And vengeance rises from the tomb.

A R S A C E S.

O God !

Enough already hast thou try'd thy servant,
 Or must I yeild that life which you restor'd ?
 Yes : I was born midst grandeur, shame, and horror :
 My mother—Ninus ! O what deadly purpose—
 But if the traitor Assur was alone
 To blame, if he——

O R O E S.

[Giving him the letter.

Behold this paper here,

Too faithful witness of her guilt, then say
 If yet a doubt remains.

A R S A C E S.

ARSACES.

Haste, give it me,

And clear them all.

[He reads]

Ha! "*Ninus to Phradates:*

"I die by poison, guard my Ninias well,

"Defend him from his foes: my guilty wife——

O R O E S.

Need'st thou more proof? this witness came from
thee.

He had not finish'd; death, thou see'st, broke off
Th'imperfect scroll, and stopp'd his feeble hand;
Phradates hath unfolded all the rest,
Read this, and learn the whole.

[Gives him another paper.]

It is enough

That Ninus hath commanded thee, he guides
Thy steps, and leads thee to the throne, but says
He must have blood.

ARSACES. [After reading the paper.]

O day of miracles,
And you ye dreadful oracles from hell,
Dark as the tomb which I must visit, how

Shall

Shall I unveil your secret purposes,
 When he who is to make the sacrifice
 Knows not his victim ! Who shall guide my choice ?
 I tremble at it.

O R O E S.

Tremble for the guilty..

Amidst the horrors that oppress thy soul,
 The gods will guide thee ; deem not thou thyself
 A common mortal, from the race of men
 Thou art distinguish'd, set apart by heav'n,
 And noted by its signature divine.
 Walk thou secure, tho' night conceals thy fate,
 The gods of thy great ancestors employ thee
 But as their instrument, what right hast thou
 To litigate their pow'r, and to oppose
 Thy masters ? Sav'd from death, as thou hast been,
 Be thankful still ; complain not, but adore.

S C E N E III.

A R S A C E S, M I T R A N E S.

A R S A C E S.

I cannot reconcile this strange event :
 Semiramis my mother ! can it be ?

M I T R A N E S.

SE MIRAMIS.

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MITRANES.

[entering in haste.

My lord, the people in this hour of terror
Demand their king : permit me first to hail thee
The husband of Semiramis, and lord
Of Babylon : the queen is hasting hither
In search of thee ; I bless the happy hour
That gave her to thee : ha ! not answer me !
Despair is in thy looks, thy lips are clos'd
In dreadful silence, thou art pale with terror,
And thy whole frame's disorder'd : what has pass'd ?
What have they said ?

ARSACES.

I'll fly to Azema.

MITRANES.

Amazing ! can it be Arsaces ? fly
A queen's embraces ; scorn her proffer'd love ;
Insult her choice ; the royal hand that spurn'd
Kings for thy sake ! thus are her hopes betray'd.

ARSACES.

Gods ! 'tis Semiramis herself ; O Ninus,
Now let thy tomb in its dark bosom hide
Her crimes, and me !

SCENE

S C E N E I V.

S E M I R A M I S, A R S A C E S.

S E M I R A M I S.

Arsaces, all is ready.

We want but thee, great master of the world,
 Whose fate, like mine, depends on thee; O haste,
 And make our bliss complete! with joy I see
 Thy brows encircled with that sacred wreath:
 The priest, I know, was by the gods commanded
 To crown thee with it; heav'n and hell at once
 Approve thy choice, and by these signs confirm it:
 Assur's seditious party, struck with awe
 And holy rev'rence, tremble at my presence;
 Ninus, at length propitious, hath requir'd
 A sacrifice, O haste, and give it him,
 That we may soon be blest: the people's hearts
 Are all with us, and Assur's threats are vain.

A R S A C E S.

[walking about with great emotion.]

Assur! away! in his perfidious blood
 The parricide—we will revenge thee, Ninus.

S E M I R A M I S.

What do I hear? just heav'n! speak'st thou of him,
 Of Ninus?

A R S A C E S.

SEMIRAMIS.

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ARSACES,

[wildly.

Said'st thou not, his guilty hand

(coming to himself.)

Had shed — to arm against his queen! the slave,
That was enough to make me hate him.

SEMIRAMIS.

Haste then,

Receive my hand, and thus begin thy vengeance.

ARSACES.

My father!

SEMIRAMIS.

Ha! what looks are those, Arfaces?

Is this the soft submissive tender heart
Which I expected from thee, when I gave
My willing hand? That fearful prodigies,
And spectres rising from the dark domain,
Shou'd leave the marks of horror on thy soul,
Alarms me not, I feel them too, but less
When I behold Arfaces: do not thus
O'erspread this fairest dawn of happiness
With sorrow's gloomy shade, but still appear
Such as thou wert when trembling at my feet,
Least Assur e'er shou'd be thy master; fear
Nor him, nor Ninus and his angry shade;

My

My dear Arsaces, thou art my support,
My lord, my husband.

ARSACES.

[turning aside from her]

'Tis too much, O stop:

Her guilt o'erwhelms me.

SEMIRAMIS.

How his soul's disturb'd!

Alas! he wants that peace which he bestow'd
On me.

ARSACES.

Semiramis —

SEMIRAMIS.

What woud'st thou? speak.

ARSACES.

I cannot: leave me, leave me: hence! begone.

SEMIRAMIS.

Amazing! leave thee! can I e'er forsake
Arsaces? O explain this mystery to me,
And ease my tortur'd soul: it makes us both
Unhappy:— ha! despair is in thy aspect;
Thou chill'st my veins with horror, and thy eyes
Are dreadful; they affright me more than heav'n
And hell united to oppose my vows:
Scarce can my trembling lips pronounce, I love thee:

Some

Some pow'r invisible now leads me on
Towards thee, now witholds me from thy arms,
And mingles, how I know not, tend'rest love
With sentiments of horror and despair.

ARSACES.

Hate me, abhor me.

SEMIRAMIS.

Can'st thou bid me hate thee?

Cruel Arfaces, No: I still must trace
Thy footsteps, still my heart must follow thine:
What is that paper which thou look'st on thus
With horror, whilst thy eyes are bath'd in tears,
Does that contain a reason for thy coldness?

ARSACES.

It does.

SEMIRAMIS.

Then give it me.

ARSACES.

I must not: dar'st thou—

SEMIRAMIS.

I'll have it.

ARSACES

Leave to me that dreadful scroll.

To thee 'twere fatal, I have use for it.

SEMIRAMIS.

Whence came it?

ARSACES.

SEMIRAMIS.

ARSACES.

From the gods.

SEMIRAMIS.

And wrote by whom?

ARSACES.

Wrote by my father.

SEMIRAMIS.

Ha! what say'st thou?

ARSACES.

Tremble.

SEMIRAMIS.

Give it me, let me know at once my fate.

ARSACES.

Urge it it no more; there's death in ev'ry line.

SEMIRAMIS.

No matter: clear my doubts, or I shall think
That thou art guilty.

ARSACES.

Ye immortals pow'rs

That guide our steps, it is to your decrees
That I submit.

SEMIRAMIS.

For the last time, Arsaces,
I here command thee, listen, and obey.

ARSACES.

SEMIRAMIS.

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ARSACES, [giving her the letter.

O may thy justice, heav'n, be satisfy'd !

And this the only punishment that e'er

Shall be inflicted on her ! now 'tis past,

And thou wilt know too much.

[She reads.

SEMIRAMIS.

[to Otanes.

What do I read?

Support me, or I die.

[She faints

ARSACES.

She fees it all.

SEMIRAMIS, [coming to herself, after a long silence.

Delay not, but fulfil thy destiny :

Punish this guilty, this unhappy wretch,

And in my blood wash out the deadly stain.

Nature deceiv'd is horrible to both,

Revenge thy father, strike, and punish me.

ARSACES.

No : let the sacred character I bear,

The name of son, preserve me from that crime !

Much rather wou'd I pierce the heart of him

Who still reveres thee, the poor lost Arfaces

SEMIRAMIS.

[kneeling.

Be cruel as Semiramis, she felt

No pity, therefore be the son of Ninus,

And take my life : thou wilt not ; nay, thy tears

Ev'n

Ev'n mix with mine : O Ninias, 'tis a day
 Of horrors, yet there's pleasure in this pain.
 Before thou giv'st me what I have deserv'd,
 The stroke of death, let nature's voice be heard :
 O let a guilty mother's tears bedew
 That dear, that fatal hand.

A R S A C E S.

I am thy son,
 'Tis not for thee, whate'er thy guilt, to fall
 Thus at my feet : O rise, thy Ninias begs,
 He loves thee still, still vows obedience to thee,
 Respect and purest love : consider me
 As a new subject, only more submissive,
 More humble than the rest ; I hope, more dear.
 Heav'n that restores thy son is sure appeas'd :
 The gods who pardon thee reserve their vengeance
 For Assur, leave him to his fate.

S E M I R A M I S.

Receive
 My crown and sceptre, I have much disgrac'd them.

A R S A C E S.

Still, I beseech you, hold me ignorant
 Of all, and let me with the world adore you.

S E M I-

SEMIRAMIS.

123

SEMIRAMIS.

O no: my guilt's too flagrant.

ARSACES.

But repentance

May blot it out.

SEMIRAMIS.

Ninus hath giv'n to thee

The reins of empire, thou must not offend

His vengeful spirit.

ARSACES.

O it will relent

At thy remorse, and soften at my tears.

Otanes, in the name of heav'n, preserve

My mother, and conceal the horrid secret.

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT V. SCENE I.

SEMIRAMIS, OTANES.

OTANES.

I- O 'Twas some god that smil'd propitious on thee,
Who thus prevented these abhorred nuptials;
Whilst nature shudder'd at th' approaching danger,
Gave thee a son, and sav'd thee thus from incest.

VOL. II.

G

The

The oracles of Ammon, and the voice
 From hell, the shades of Ninus, all declar'd
 The day appointed for thy second marriage
 Shou'd end thy sorrows, but they never said
 That marriage e'er shou'd be accomplish'd : No:
 The nuptials were prepar'd : thou hast fulfill'd
 Thy destiny : thy son reveres thee still :
 Mild is the justice of offended heav'n,
 Which only asks a private sacrifice :
 This day Semiramis shall still be happy.

S E M I R A M I S.

Alas ! there is no happiness for me,
 Otanes : Ninias smiles indeed upon me :
 A mother's sorrows for a time will plead
 More strongly with him than the blood of Ninus,
 And my past crimes ; but soon his tenderness
 And filial love may change perhaps to wrath
 And fierce resentment for a mur'der'd father.

O T A N E S.

What fear'st thou from a son ? what dire presage —

S E M I R A M I S.

Fear is the nat'ral punishment of guilt,
 And still attends it : this detested Assur,
 Has he attempted aught, say, does he know
 What pass'd of late, and who Arfaces is ?

O T A N E S.

O T A N E S.

The dreadful secret still remains unknown ;
The shade of Ninus is by all rever'd ;
But how to comprehend the oracle
They know not ; how they must avenge his ashes ;
How serve his son—the minds of men are struck
With wild astonishment, in silence now
They wait the hour when the self-open'd tomb
Shall banish all their fears, and make them happy.
Mean time the soldiers are in arms, the people
Croud to the altars ; wretched Azema,
Trembling and pale, with terror in her looks,
Walks round the tomb, and lifts her hands to heav'n ;
Whilst Ninias stands astonish'd in the temple,
Prepar'd to strike his victim yet unknown :
The gloomy Assur meditates revenge,
Unites the remnants of his scatter'd party,
And forms some dark design.

S E M I R A M I S.

I have kept fair
Too long already with him : seize the traitor,
Otanés, bear him to my son in chains ;
Ninias shall soon appease eternal justice,

At least with Assur's blood, my vile accomplice.
 Ninus, thou see'st I am a mother still ;
 Thou see'st my heart, O take it, take it all,
 And make it rise a grateful sacrifice !
 Ha ! who approaches with such hasty steps ?
 How ev'ry thing appalls my flutt'ring soul !

S C E N E II.

S E M I R A M I S, A Z E M A, O T A N E S.

A Z E M A.

O queen, forgive me if I come uncall'd ;
 But terrors worse than death have forc'd me thus
 To clasp thy knees, and beg thy royal mercy —

S E M I R A M I S.

What woud'st thou, princess ? speak.

A Z E M A.

To snatch a hero
 From instant danger, stop a traitor's hand,
 And save Arfaces.

S E M I R A M I S.

Ha ! what hand ? Arfaces !

A Z E M A.

He is thy husband, Azema's betray'd,
 He lives for you alone ; no matter —

S E M I R A M I S.

He

My husband ! gods !

A Z E M A.

A Z E M A.

The sacred tie that binds you—

S E M I R A M I S.

The tie is dreadful, impious, and abhorr'd:

Arfaces is—but speak, go on; I tremble:

What dangers? haste and tell me.

A Z E M A.

Well thou know'st,

Perhaps this very moment, whilst I ask

Thy aid, perhaps—

S E M I R A M I S.

Well, what?

A Z E M A.

That demi-god

Whom we adore demands the sacrifice

Within the dreary lab'rins of the tomb:

What are the crimes Arfaces must atone for

I know not.

S E M I R A M I S.

Crimes! just heav'n!

A Z E M A.

But impious Assur

Hath sworn to violate that sacred place

Which mortals dare not enter.

S E M I R A M I S.

Ay! indeed

Hath Assur sworn it?

G 3

A Z E M A.

A Z E M A.

In the dead of night

The wily traitor had long since secur'd
 A safe retreat, if e'er occasion call'd,
 Within the secret winding of the tomb,
 Where now he means to do the bloody deed,
 To brave the pow'rs of hell, and wrath of heav'n ;
 With sacrilegious hand he wou'd destroy
 The generous Arsaces.

S E M I R A M I S.

Heav'n ! what say'st thou ?

By what detested means ?

A Z E M A.

Believe a heart

By love enlighten'd, and by love inspir'd :
 I knew the traitor's rank envenom'd hatred,
 Mark'd how the trembling faction by his zeal
 Reviv'd ; I pry'd into their secret councils,
 Pretended to unite his cause with mine,
 And join our int'rests ; I have look'd into him,
 Have wrested from his heart the fatal secret.
 Boldly he marches on, and hopes to pass
 Unpunish'd : well he knows that none dare enter
 That holy place, not Oroes himself :
 Thither he's gone : mean time his slaves report
 Arsaces is the victim that must die

For

For Babylon, and Ninus in his blood
 Shall satiate his revenge : the nobles meet,
 The people murmur ; Ninus, Assur, heav'n,
 Are all incens'd : I tremble for Arfaces.

S E M I R A M I S.

My dearest Azema, heav'n speaks by thee :
 It is enough : I see what must be done.
 Repose thyself with safety on a mother ;
 Daughter, our danger is the same ; go thou,
 Defend thy husband, I will save my son.

A Z E M A.

O heav'n !

S E M I R A M I S.

I meant to wed him, but the gods
 In mercy have forbid it : they inspire
 A hapless mother now : —but time is precious ;
 Go : leave me here, and in my name command
 The nobles, priests, and people, to attend me.

[Azema goes into the porch of the temple, and Semiramis
 advances towards the tomb.]

Thou shade of Ninus, lo ! I fly t'avenge thee ;
 The hour is come when thou didst promise me
 Admittance to thy tomb ; I have obey'd thee,
 Call'd by thy voice, behold me here to save
 My son. Ye guards that wait around my throne

G 4

Approach :

Approach : henceforth Arfaces 's your king ;
 No more obedient to Semiramis,
 Observe his laws, to him the sov'reign pow'r
 I here resign ; be you his subjects now,
 And his defenders.

[Guards appear, and range themselves on each side at the
 further part of the stage.

Gracious heav'n ! protect me.

[She goes into the tomb,

S C E N E III.

A Z E M A.

[returning from the porch of the temple to the front of the stage.

What can she purpose ? O it is too late
 To save him now ; I know not what to think :
 'Tis wond'rous all ; O 'tis a dreadful moment,
 Arfaces ! Ninias ! ye immortal pow'rs
 Who guide our fate, O say, did you restore
 My lov'd Arfaces but to snatch him from me ?

S C E N E IV.

A Z E M A, N I N I A S.

A Z E M A.

Ha ! Ninias ! can it be ? Art thou indeed
 Great Ninus' son, my sov'reign, and my husband ?

O !

N I N I A S.

O ! thou behold'st me, Azema, aſham'd
 To know myſelf, ſprung from the blood of gods,
 And ſhudd'ring at the thought : O ! Azema,
 Remove my terrors, calm my troubled ſoul,
 Strengthen my arm uprais'd t'avenge a father.

A Z E M A.

Take heed how thou perform'st that dreadful office.

N I N I A S.

He hath commanded, and I muſt obey.

A Z E M A.

Ninus wou'd never ſacrifice his ſon :
 Impoſſible !

N I N I A S.

What ſays my Azema ?

A Z E M A.

Ne'er ſhalt thou enter that abhorred place,
 For know, a traitor lies in wait for thee.

N I N I A S.

Who ſhall withhold or terrify Arſaces ?

A Z E M A.

Thou art the victim to be offer'd there :
 With ſacrilegious ſteps the impious Aſſur

Profanes the sacred tomb, and rashly dares
To violate its privilege divine :
He waits thee there.

NINIAS.

Good heav'n ! then all is plain ;
I'm satisfy'd : the victim is prepar'd ;
My father, poison'd by the wicked Assur,
Demands the traitor's blood : instructed thus
By Oroes, and conducted by the gods,
Arm'd by the hand of Ninus' self, I go
To punish the assassin : thither led
By heav'n's eternal justice, my weak hand
Is but the instrument of pow'r divine :
The gods do all, and my astonish'd soul
Yields to that voice which must decree my fate :
Spite of ourselves, our ways are noted down,
Mark'd, and determin'd : prodigies are spread
Around the throne, and spirits call'd from hell
To wander here : but fearless I obey,
Believe, and trust in heav'n.

AZEMA.

Whate'er the gods
Have done but fills my soul with sad dismay :
Ninus was lov'd by them ; yet Ninus perish'd.

NINIAS.

N I N I A S.

But now they will avenge him : cease thy plaints.

A Z E M A.

Oft have they chose the purest victim, oft
Have shed the blood of innocence.

N I N I A S.

No more ;

They will defend whom thus they have united :
They by a father's voice exhorted us,
Gave me a throne, a mother, and a wife.
Soon shalt thou see me sprinkled with the blood
Of the vile murth'rer ; from the tomb those gods
Shall lead me to the altar ; I obey ;
It is enough : the rest be left to heav'n.

S C E N E V.

A Z E M A alone.

O guard his footsteps in this fatal tomb !
Ye pow'rs inscrutable, whose blood must flow
This day ? I tremble for th'event, and dread
The hand of Assur, long inur'd to slaughter ;
E'en on his father's ashes may he shed
The blood of Ninias : O may the dark womb
Of hell receive and swallow up his rage !
Ye light'nings blast him ! O illustrious shade

Of

Of Ninus, wherefore woud'st thou not permit
 A wretched wife to go with her dear lord ?
 O guide, support him in this place of darkness !
 Did I not hear the voice of Ninias mix'd
 With deadly groans ? O wou'd this sacred tomb,
 Which I profane, but open to my wishes
 The gate of death !—I will descend :—I go—
 Hark ! the earth shakes, and dreadful light'nings flash
 Athwart the skies : fear, hope, despair—he comes.

S C E N E VI.

NINIAS, a bloody sword in his hand, A Z E M A.

NINIAS,

O heav'n ! where am I ?

A Z E M A.

O ! my lord, you're pale,
 And bloody, froz'n with horror.

NINIAS,

'Tis the blood
 Of the vile parricide : I wander'd down
 Ev'n to the bottom of the tomb ; my father
 Still led me onward thro' its winding paths,
 He walk'd before, and pointed out the place
 Of my revenge : there, by th'imperfect light
 That glimmer'd thro' the dreary vault, I saw,

Or

Or thought I saw, uprais'd, the murth'rer's sword :
Methought he trembled ; guilt is ever fearful :
Twice did I plunge my sword into his heart,
And with my bloody arm, which rage had strengthen'd,
Had drag'd him in the dust towards the place
Whence the dim rays of light appear'd : and yet
I own to thee, his deep heart-rending sighs,
The mournful sounds, imperfect as they were,
That reach'd my ears, his humble vows to heav'n,
With that repentance which in his last hour
Seem'd to possess his soul, the hallow'd place,
The voice of pity, which, revenge once o'er,
Calls loudly on us, with I know not what
Of dark mysterious terror, shook my soul,
And made me leave the bleeding victim there.
What can this trouble, this strange horror mean
That dwells upon me, Azema ? My heart
Is pure, ye gods, my hands are innocent,
Stain'd only with the blood you bid me shed ;
I've serv'd the cause of heav'n, and yet am wretched.

A Z E M A,

The dead are satisfy'd, and nature too :
Come let us quit this horrid place, and seek
Thy mother, she shall calm thy troubled mind :
Since Assur is no more —

S C E N E

SCENE VII.

NINIAS, AZEMA, ASSUR.

[Assur appears at a distance with Otanes, surrounded by guards.

AZEMA.

O heav'n! he's there.

NINIAS.

Assur!

AZEMA.

O haste, ye ministers of heav'n,
Ye servants of the king, defend your master.

SCENE VIII.

OROES, the high-priest, with the magi and people assembled,
OTANES, NINIAS, AZEMA, MITRANES,
ASSUR disarm'd,

OTANES.

They need not: by the queen's command I've seiz'd
The traitor, who attempted to profane
Your sacred monument, and enter there:
I shall deliver him to thee.

NINIAS.

Alas!

What victim then hath Ninias sacrific'd?

OROES.

OROES.

Heav'n is pleas'd, and vengeance now complete.
Behold, ye people, your king's murderer.

[pointing to Assur.

Behold, ye people, your king's successor.

[pointing to Ninias,

'Tis Ninias, Babylon's lost prince, restor'd :
He is your sov'reign, know him, and obey.

ASSUR.

Thou Ninias !

OROES.

Ay ; 'tis he : the guardian god,
Who sav'd him from thy rage, hath brought him hither ;
That god whose vengeance hath o'ertaken thee.

ASSUR.

Ha ! did Semiramis then give thee life ?

NINIAS.

She did, and pow'r withal to punish thee :
Guards take him hence, and rid me of a monster.
He was not worthy of my sword ; to fall
By Ninias' hand had been a death too glorious.
The victim hath escap'd me ; let him die,
Ev'n as he liv'd, with infamy : away.

ASSUR.

It is my heaviest punishment to see
Ninias my sov'reign : but 'tis pleasure still

To

To leave thee more unhappy than myself ;

[Semiramis appears at the foot of the tomb wounded,
and almost dead, one of the magi supporting her,

Look yonder, and behold what thou hast done.

[pointing to Semiramis.

N I N I A S.

Whom have I slain ?

A Z E M A.

Fly, my dear Ninias, fly.

This fatal place.

M I T R A N E S.

What hast thou done ?

O R O E S.

[placing himself between Ninias and the tomb;

Away ;

And cleanse those bloody hands : give me the sword,
That fatal instrument of wrath divine.

N I N I A S.

No : let me plunge it to my heart :

[He attempts to destroy himself, the guards interpose,

O R O E S.

Disarm him.

S E M I R A M I S.

[Brought forward and seated on a sofa,

Revenge me, O my son ; some base assassin
Has slain thy mother.

Ninias.

N I N I A S.

O unhappy hour ;

Unheard of guilt ! for know, that base assassins,
That monster was—thy son : this hand hath pierc'd
The breast that nourish'd and supported me :
But soon thou shalt have vengeance, Ninias soon
Shall follow thee.

S E M I R A M I S.

I went into the tomb

To save thee, Ninias ; thy unhappy mother—
But from thy hands I have receiv'd the fate
I merited.

N I N I A S.

This last, this fatal stroke,
Sinks deep into my soul : but here I call
Those gods to witness who conducted me,
Those who mislead my steps—

S E M I R A M I S.

No more, my son :

Freely I pardon thee, and only make
This last request, that those dear hands may close
My dying eyes.

[He kneels,

A mother begs it of thee :

Thy heart I know was stranger to the deed :

O

O wou'd that I had been as innocent
When Ninus dy'd ! but I have suffer'd for it.
Henceforth let mortals know, that there are crimes
Offended heaven never can forgive.
O Ninias, Azema, let your blest union
Blot out my crimes ; come near your dying mother ;
Give me your hands ; long may ye live and reign
In happiness ! that hope still gives me comfort,
And mingles joy ev'n with the pangs of death.
It comes, I feel it. O ! my children, think
On your Semiramis, O do not hate
My mem'ry, — O my son, my son — tis past.

O R O E S.

Her eyes are sunk in darkness : help the king
And guard his life. Learn from her sad example,
That heav'n is witness to our secret crimes :
The higher is the criminal, remember,
The gods inflict the greater punishment ;
Kings, tremble on your thrones, and fear their justice.

END of the FIFTH and last ACT.

THE
D E A T H
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C Æ S A R.
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L E T T E R
FROM
SIGNOR ALGAROTTI,
TO
SIGNOR FRANCHINI,
ENVOY at FLORENCE.

On the TRAGEDY of JULIUS CÆSAR, by
Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.

S I R,

I Have defer'd sending you the Julius Cæsar, which you desir'd, till now, that I might have the pleasure of communicating to you the tragedy on that subject, as written by Mr. de Voltaire. The edition of it printed at Paris some months ago, is extremely faulty ; one may easily perceive in it the hand of some of those gentlemen, whom Petronius calls Doctores Umbratici. It is even so shamefully defective, as to give us verses that have not the proper number of syllables.

lables. This piece, notwithstanding, has been as severely criticis'd, as if Mr. de Voltaire himself had publish'd it: wou'd it not be cruelly unjust to impute to Titian, the bad colouring of one of his pictures, that had been dawb'd over by a modern painter? I have been fortunate enough to procure a manuscript fit to be sent to you: you will see the picture exactly as it came out of the hand of the master: I will even venture to accompany it with the remarks which you desired of me.

Not to know that there is a French language and a French theatre, cannot shew a greater degree of ignorance, than not to know to what perfection Corneille and Racine carry'd the drama. It seem'd, indeed, as if, after these great men, nothing remain'd to be wish'd for, and that all which cou'd be done, was to endeavour to imitate them. Cou'd one expect any thing in painting after the Galatæa of Raphael? and yet the famous head of Michael Angelo, in the little Farnese, gave us an idea of a species more fierce and terrible, to which this art might be rais'd. In the fine arts, we do not perceive the void till after it is fill'd up. Most of the tragedies of the great masters I just now mention'd, whether the scene lies at Rome, Athens

or Constantinople, contain nothing more than a marriage concerted, or broken off: we can expect, indeed, nothing better in this species of tragedy, wherein love makes peace or war with a smile. I cannot help thinking but that the drama is capable of something infinitely superior to this. Julius Cæsar is to me a proof of it. The author of the tender Zara breathes nothing here but sentiments of ambition, liberty, and revenge.

Tragedy shou'd be an imitation of great men; it is that which distinguishes it from comedy: but if the actions which it represents are likewise great, the distinction is still better mark'd out, and by these means we may arrive at a nobler species. Do we not admire Mark Antony more at Philippi than at Actium? I am apprehensive, notwithstanding, that reasonings of this kind will meet of the strongest opposition. We must have very little acquaintance with human nature not to know, that prejudice generally gets the better of reason; and above all, those prejudices that are authoris'd by a sex that imposes laws upon us, which we always submit to with pleasure.

Love has been too long in possession of the French theatre, to suffer any other passions to supplant it, which inclines me to think, that Julius Cæsar will
meet

meet with the fate of Themistocles, Alcibiades, and many other great men of Athens, that of being admir'd by all mankind : whilst Ostracism banish'd them from their own country.

In some places Mr. de Voltaire has imitated Shakespear, an English poet, who united in the same piece the most childish absurdities and the finest strokes of the true sublime, He has made the same use of him as Virgil did of Ennius, and taken from him the two last scenes, which are, doubtless, the finest models of eloquence which the stage ever produced.

Quum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere velles.

What is it but the remains of barbarism in Europe, to endeavour to make those bounds which power and policy have prescribed to separate states and kingdoms, the limits also of science, and the fine arts, whose progress might be so widely extended by that commerce and mutual light which they wou'd throw on each other : a reflection which may be more serviceable to the French nation than any other, as it is exactly in the case of an author, from whom the public expect more in proportion to what they have already received from him. France is so highly polish'd and cultivated, that we have a right to demand of her,

not

not only that she shou'd approve, but that she shou'd adopt and enrich herself with every thing that is excellent amongst her neighbours :

Tros Rutulufve fuat, nullo discrimine habeto.

There is one objection to this tragedy, which I shou'd not have mentioned to you, but that I heard it made by many, that it has but three acts: this, say the critics, is against all the rules of the stage, which require that there shou'd be exactly five. It is certainly one of the first rules of the drama, that the representation shou'd not take up more time than the real action. They have therefore very rationally limited that time to three hours, because a longer wou'd weary the attention; and, at the same time, wou'd prevent our uniting in the same point of view, the different circumstances of the action. Upon this principle, we have divided the play into five acts, for the conveniency of the spectators, and of the author also, who has leisure to bring about, during these intervals, any incident necessary to the plot or catastrophe. The whole of the objection then after all is no more, than that the action of Julius Cæsar lasts but two hours instead of three: and if that is no fault, neither can the division of its acts be esteem'd as one; because the

same rule which requires that an action of three hours shou'd be divided into five acts, will require also, that an action of two hours shou'd be divided into three only. There is no reason why, because the utmost extent of the play is limited to three hours, that therefore we shou'd not make it less; nor can I see why a tragedy, where the three unities are observ'd, which is interesting, and excites terror and compassion, which in short does every thing in two hours, that others do in three, shou'd not be equally good. A statue wherein the fine proportions and other rules of the art are observ'd, is not a less fine statue, because it is of a smaller size than any other, made by the same rules. Nobody, I believe, thinks the Venus of Medicis less perfect in its kind than the Gladiator, because it is but four foot high, and the Gladiator six. Mr. de Voltaire, perhaps, gave his Cæsar less extent than is usually allow'd to dramatic performances, only to sound the opinion and taste of the public by an essay, if we may give that name to so finish'd a piece. It wou'd have made a kind of revolution in the French theatre, and had been, perhaps, too bold a venture, to talk of liberty and politics for three hours together, to a nation that had been so long accusom'd to see Mithridates sighing and whining, when he was just on the
point

point of marching to the capitol. We are surely oblig'd to Mr. de Voltaire for his conduct, and ought by no means to condemn him for not bringing love, or women, into his play: born as they are, to inspire soft and tender sentiments, they wou'd have play'd an absurd and ridiculous part between Brutus and Cassius, *Atroces Animæ*: they make indeed so conspicuous figures elsewhere, that they have no reason to complain of being excluded from Cæsar. I shall pass over the many detach'd beauties to be met with in this piece, the strength of its numbers, and the variety of images and sentiments scatter'd throughout. What might we not expect from the author of Brutus and the Henriade? the scene of the conspiracy is one of the finest we have ever seen on any stage: it hath call'd into action that which we never met with before but in dull narration.

* Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures
 Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, & quæ
 Ipse sibi tradit spectator.

Even the death of Cæsar passes almost in sight of the spectators, and thus prevents a recital of it, which how

* See Horace de Arte Poetica, v. 180.

beautiful soever, must have been comparatively cold and languid ; events of this kind, together with every circumstance attending them, being already known to all the world.

I cannot sufficiently admire this tragedy, when I consider what a variety of incidents there are in it, how great the characters are, and how finely supported : what a noble contrast between Brutus and Cæsar ! What makes this subject most difficult to handle, is the great art required, to describe, on the one hand, Brutus with a savage ferocious virtue, and even bordering on ingratitude, but at the same time engag'd in a righteous cause, at least to all appearances, and conformable to the times he liv'd in ; and on the other hand, Cæsar, full of clemency and the most amiable virtues, heaping favors on his enemies, and yet endeavouring to destroy the liberty of his country. We are strongly interested for both of them during the whole action of the piece, though it shou'd seem as if the passions must hurt and destroy each other reciprocally in the end, like two several weights equal and oppos'd chto ea other, and consequently cou'd produce no effect, but that of sending the spectators back disgusted, and without any emotion. Some such reflections most probably

probably induc'd a * brother poet to declare, that he look'd upon this subject as the rock of dramatic authors, and that he wou'd gladly propose it to any of his rivals. But Mr. de Voltaire, not content with these difficulties, seems desirous of creating more, by making Brutus the son of Cæsar; which, however, is founded on history. He has even, by these means, found an opportunity of introducing some charming scenes, and throwing into his piece a new interest, which is united to the action, and brings on the catastrophe. The harangue of Antony produces a fine effect, and is, in my opinion, a model of seducing eloquence. Upon the whole, we may with truth assert, that Mr. de Voltaire, in this tragedy, has open'd a new path, and, at the same time, trod in it with the highest success.

* M. Martelli, who wrote several tragedies in Italian: he made use of a new species of rhimes, in the manner of Alexandrines, a novelty which was by no means favourable to his performances.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JULIUS CÆSAR, Dictator.

MARK ANTONY, Consul.

JUNIUS BRUTUS, Prætor.

CASSIUS,

CIMBER,

DECIMUS,

DOLABELLA,

CASCA,

ROMANS.

LICTORS.

} Senators.

SCENE, the Capitol at ROME.

THE

THE
D E A T H
O F
C Æ S A R.
A
T R A G E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

CÆSAR, ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Y E S, Cæsar, thou shalt reign ; the day is come,
Propitious to thy vows, when haughty Rome
At length shall know, and shall reward thy virtues,
Long time unjust to thee and to herself,
Shall hail thee on the throne her great avenger,
Her conqu'ror, and her king : on Antony
Thou may'st depend, who never felt the sting
Of envy, but still held thy honour dear,

H 4

Ev'n

Ev'n as his own : thou know'st I form'd the chain
Which for the neck of Rome thou hast prepar'd,
Content to be the second of mankind ;
Fonder to bind the wreath on Cæsar's brows
Than rule myself : thou answer'st me with sighs,
And the fair prospect that elates my soul
Depresses thine ; the master of the world,
The king of Rome complains : can Cæsar mourn ?
Can Cæsar fear ? what can inspire a soul
Like thine with terror ?

CÆSAR.

Friendship, Antony :

But I must open all my heart to thee.
Thou know'st that I must leave thee, fate decrees
We must transport our arms to Babylon,
To wash out, in the savage Parthian's blood,
The shame of Crassus, and the Roman people :
My touring eagle to the Bosphorus
Shall wing his way, my faithful legions wait
But for the royal wreath around my brows,
The wish'd for signal : wherefore shou'd not Cæsar
Subdue a kingdom Alexander conquer'd ?
The Rhine submitted, why shou'd not Euphrates
To Cæsar's arms ? that hope shall animate
The bosom of thy friend, yet blinds him not ;
Fortune

Fortune perhaps, grown weary of her favours,
At length may leave me; Pompey she betray'd,
And may quit Cæsar too; the deepest wisdom
Is oft deceiv'd: where faction reigns, our fate
Suspended hangs, as on the battle's edge,
'Tis but a step from triumph to disgrace.
Cæsar, thou know'st, these forty years hath serv'd,
Commanded, conquer'd, seen the fate of empires
Lodg'd in my hands, and trust me, Antony,
In ev'ry action the decisive stroke
Depended on a moment: but whate'er
Chance may bring forth, my heart has nought to
fear,

Cæsar shall conquer without pride, or die
Without complaint: but from thy tender friendship
One precious boon I must demand of thee;
My children, Antony, will find a friend,
I hope, in thee: I hope that Rome, by me
Defended, and by me subdu'd, will own
Thy pow'r; thou shalt, with my sons, enjoy
The name of king, and rule o'er all mankind;
Remember, 'tis the last request I make,
That thou wilt be a father to my children;
I ask not for thy oaths, those idle sureties
Of human faith, thy promise is sufficient;

For purer is thy word than sacred altars,
Oft stain'd with human perjury and falsehood.

ANTONY.

It was enough to leave thy Antony,
And seek for death in foreign climes without him;
To Asia's plains, when glory calls my friend,
That I must stay in Italy to plead
My Cæsar's cause, but it afflicts me more
To see thy noble heart dejected thus,
Distrusting fortune, and presaging ills
That ne'er may happen : wherefore talk'st thou thus,
Of Antony's dividing with thy sons,
Thy fortunes, and thy fame ? thou hast no son
But thy Octavius, no adopted heir.

CÆSAR.

I can no longer hide from thee, my friend,
The griefs that prey upon a father's heart ;
Octavius, by the laws, is made the son
Of Cæsar's choice, I have appointed him
My successor ; but fate (or shall I call it
Propitious, or unkind I know not which)
Hath made me father to a real son,
One whom I love with tenderness, alas !
But ill repaid by him.

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Can there be one
So base and so ungrateful, so unworthy
The noble blood from whence he sprang?

CÆSAR.

Attend,

And mark me well : thou know'st th' unhappy Brutus,
Instructed in the school of savage virtue
By the stern Cato, he whose furious zeal
Defends our antient laws, the rigid foe
Of arbitrary pow'r, who, still in arms
Against me, gives my enemies new hope
And new support, who in Thessalia's plains
Was late my captive, whose life twice I sav'd,
Spite of himself, was born amongst my foes,
And bred up far from me.

ANTONY.

Cou'd Brutus, cou'd—

CÆSAR.

Believe not me, but read this paper.

ANTONY.

Gods!

The fierce Servilia ! Cato's haughty sister !

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

The same ; a private marriage made us one.
 Cato, when first our public discord rose,
 Indignant forc'd her to another's arms,
 But her new husband, on the very day
 That he espous'd her, dy'd ; and Cæsar's son
 Was brought up in the name of Brutus, still
 Was he reserv'd, ye gods, to hate his father !
 But read, this fatal scroll will tell thee all.

ANTONY.

[Reads the paper.]

*Cæsar, I die ; the wrath of heav'n, that cuts
 My thread of life, alone can end my love.
 Farewell : remember, Brutus is thy son :
 And may that tender friendship for his father,
 Which at her latest hour Servilia felt,
 Live in his mind, and make him worthy of thee.*
 Has cruel fate to Cæsar giv'n a son
 So much unlike him !

CÆSAR.

Brutus hath his virtues :
 His haughty courage, tho' it angers me,
 Flatters my pride ; I feel a secret pleasure,
 Tho' it offends me : his undaunted heart
 Rises superior, and ev'n conquers mine ;

I am

I am astonish'd at him, and his firmness
So shakes my soul I know not how to blame him,
When he condemns the arbitrary pow'r
I have assum'd: his genius tow'rs above me :
As man and father, some bewitching charm
Deceives me still, and pleads his cause within ;
Or, born a Roman, still my country's voice,
Spite of myself, breaks forth, and calls me tyrant :
Perhaps that liberty I mean t'oppress,
Stronger than Cæsar, forces me to love him :
Nay, more : if Brutus owes to me his life,
The son of Cæsar must abhor a master ;
For in my early years I thought like him,
Detested Sylla, and the name of tyrant :
Myself had been like him, a citizen,
The partisan of liberty and Rome,
Had not that proud usurper Pompey strove
To crush my fame beneath his growing pow'r ;
For I was born ambitious, fierce of soul,
Yet brave and virtuous ; if I were not Cæsar,
I wou'd be Brutus—but we all must yield
To our condition: Brutus soon will talk
Another language, when he knows his birth :
Trust me, the royal wreath that's destin'd for him
Will bend the stubborn temper of his soul :
For manners change with fortune : nature, blood,
My

My favors, thy advice, united all
With int'rest and with duty, must restore him.

ANTONY.

I doubt it much ; I know his savage firmness ;
The sect he follows is a sect of fools,
Perverse and obstinate, whom nothing moves,
Intractable and bold ; they make a merit
Of hard'ning minds against humanity,
Whilst angry nature falls subdu'd before them ;
To these he listens, and to these alone.
The horrid tenets which these sons of pride
Call duty, hold dominion absolute,
And lord it o'er their adamant hearts.
Cato himself, that wretched stoic, he
Who fell at Utica, that brain-sick hero,
Who spurn'd thy proffer'd pardon, and preferr'd
A shameful death to Cæsar's tender friendship,
Ev'n Cato was less stern, less proud, than he ;
Less to be fear'd than this ungrateful son,
Whom thy good heart wou'd thus endear to thee.

CÆSAR.

What hast thou said, my friend ? thy words alarm
me.

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

I love thee, Cæsar, and must not deceive thee.

CÆSAR.

Time softens all things.

ANTONY.

I despair of it.

CÆSAR.

What ! will his hatred——

ANTONY.

Trust me.

CÆSAR.

Well, no matter :

I am a father still : I oft have serv'd,
Nay sav'd, my bitt'rest foes : I wou'd be lov'd
By Rome and by my son ; my clemency
Shall conquer ev'ry heart ; the world subdu'd,
Shall join with Brutus to adore my pow'r.
Thou must assist me in the great design ;
Thou, Antony, didst lend thy useful arm
To aid me in the conquest of mankind,
Thou too must conquer Brutus ; try to soften
His spirit, and prepare his savage virtue
For the important secret which my heart
Dreads to reveal ; yet he must know it soon.

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

I will do all, but cannot hope success.

SCENE II.

CÆSAR, ANTONY, DOLABELLA.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar, the senators attend your pleasure,
Wait your supreme command, and crave admittance.

CÆSAR.

They've staid too long already ; let them enter.

ANTONY.

They come, with hatred and four discontent
On ev'ry brow.

SCENE III.

CÆSAR, ANTONY, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CIMBER,
DECIMUS, CINNA, CASCA, &c. Lictors.

CÆSAR seated.

Welcome, ye pillars of immortal Rome,
And friends to Cæsar : Cimber, Decimus,
Cassius, and Cinna, and thou, dearest Brutus,
Come near : at length behold th'important hour
When Cæsar, if the gods shall smile upon me,
Goes to complete the conquest of the world,

To

To seize the throne of Cyrus, and appease
Our Crassus' angry shade: the time is come
When what remains of universal empire,
Still unsubdu'd, shall yield to Rome and me :
Euphrates calls ; to-morrow I depart.
Brutus and Cassius follow me to Asia ;
Antony's care is Gaul and Italy ;
Cimber must rule o'er the subjected kings
Of Betis' borders, and th'Atlantick sea ;
Lydia and Greece I give to Decimus ;
Pontus to thee, Marcellus ; and to Casca
All Syria's wide domain. Our conquests thus
Protected, and Rome left in happiness
And union, nought remains but to determine
What title Cæsar, arbiter of Rome,
And of the world, shall wear : by your command
Sylla was call'd Dictator ; Marius, Consul ;
And Pompey, Emp'ror : I subdued the last,
Let that suffice ; new empires will demand
New names ; we must have one more great, more
sacred,
Less liable to change ; one long rever'd
In antient Rome, and dear to all mankind.
'Tis rumour'd thro' the world, that Rome, in vain,
Wars on the Persian ; that a king alone

Must

Must conquer there, and only kings can rule :
Cæsar will go, but Cæsar is no king,
An humble citizen alone, but fam'd
For his past service, subject to the will
And fond caprice of an uncertain people,
Who yet may thwart——you understand me,
Romans,
You know my hopes, my merit, and——my pow'r.

CIMBER.

Cæsar, I'll answer thee. Those crowns, and sceptres,
That world you give us, to the people's eye,
And to the senate, jealous of their rights,
Appear an inj'ry, not a favor done,
On such conditions : Marius, Pompey, Sylla,
Those proud usurpers of the people's pow'r,
Never pretended thus to canton out
Rome's conquests, or to dictate thus, like kings :
We hoped from Cæsar's clemency a gift
More precious, and a nobler treasure, far
Above the kingdoms which thy bounty gave.

CÆSAR.

What woud'st thou ask of Cæsar ?

CIMBER.

Liberty.

CASSIUS.

CASSIUS.

It was thy promise ; thou didst swear thyself
For ever to uproot despotic pow'r.
I thought the happy moment now was come,
When the world's conq'ror shou'd have made us happy :
Rome bath'd in blood, deserted, and enslav'd,
Found comfort in that hope : we were her children
Before we were thy slaves—I know thy pow'r,
And know that thou hast sworn.

BRUTUS.

Be Cæsar great,
But Rome still free : the mistress of the world
Abroad, shall she be manacled at home !
Rule o'er the universe, be call'd a queen,
And yet be fetter'd ! What will it avail
My wretched country, and her sons, to know
That Cæsar has new slaves to trample on ?
Perhaps the Persians are not our worst foes,
We may have greater. I've no more to offer.

CÆSAR.

And thou too, Brutus !

ANTONY.

[aside to Cæsar.]

Mark their insolence ;
And see if they are worthy of thy favour.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

And dare ye thus, ungrateful as ye are,
 Abuse my patience, and exhaust my love?
 My subjects all, by right of conquest mine,
 I bought you with my sword; ye spurn'd indeed
 At Marius, but ye were the slaves of Pompey,
 And only breath till Cæsar's wrath, too long
 Restrain'd already, bursts with fury on you.
 Ye vile Republicans, by mercy taught
 But to rebel, ye durst not thus have talk'd
 To Sylla; but my clemency provokes
 Your base ungrateful spirit to insult me:
 Cæsar, you think, will never condescend
 To take revenge, this makes you talk so bravely
 Of Rome and of your country, and affect
 This patriot pride, this grandeur of the soul,
 Before your conq'ror: to Pharsalia's plains
 You shou'd have brought 'em; fortune now has plac'd

us

At distance from each other: henceforth learn,
 Who knows not how to conquer, must obey.

BRUTUS.

No: Cæsar we shall only learn to die.
 Who begg'd his life in Theffaly? Thou gav'st
 What was not ask'd indeed, but to debase us,

And

And we abhor the gift on such conditions.

Obeys thee? No: pour forth thy wrath upon us;
Begin with me; strike here, if thou woud'st reign.

CÆSAR.

Brutus attend —— you may retire.

[To the senators, who go out.

What words

Are these? away! They pierce my very soul;
Cæsar is far from wishing for thy death:
Leave this rash senate, I entreat thee, stay,
Thou only can'st disarm me; thee alone
Cæsar wou'd wish to love: stay with me, Brutus.

BRUTUS.

But keep thy promise, and I'm thine for ever;
If thou'rt a tyrant, I detest thy love;
I will not stay with Antony or thee:
He is no Roman, for he wants a king.

SCENE IV.

CÆSAR, ANTONY.

ANTONY.

What says my friend? Did Antony deceive him?
Think'st thou that nature e'er can move a soul
So fierce, and so inflexible? No: leave,
I beg thee, unreveal'd the fatal secret

That

That weighs upon thy heart : let him deplore
The fall of Rome, but never let him know
Whose blood he persecutes : he merits not
His noble birth, ungrateful to thy goodness,
Ungrateful to thy love ; henceforth renounce him.

CÆSAR.

I cannot, for I love him still.

ANTONY.

Then cease

To love thy pow'r, renounce the diadem,
Descend from the high rank which thou hast borne ;
Mercy ill suits with thy authority :
It checks thy growing pow'r, and mars thy purpose.
What ! Rome beneath thy laws, and suffer Cassius
To thwart thee thus ; and Cimber too, and Cinna ;
Shall senators like these, obscure and low,
Talk thus before the sov'reign of mankind ?
The vanquish'd wretches breath, and brave the
master.

CÆSAR.

My equals born, they yielded to my arms ;
Too much above to fear them : I forgive
Their trembling at the yoke which they must bear.

ANTONY

ANTONY.

Marius had been less sparing of their blood,
And Sylla wou'd have punish'd them.

CÆSAR.

That Sylla

Was a Barbarian, born but to oppress :
Murther and rage were all his policy,
And all his grandeur : amidst sighs and groans,
And punishments and death, he govern'd Rome :
He was its terror, I wou'd be its joy,
And its delight : I know the people well ;
A day will change 'em ; lavish of their love
And of their hatred ; both are gain'd with ease :
My grandeur galls 'em, but my clemency
Attracts 'em still : 'tis policy to pardon
The foe that cannot hurt us, and an air
Of liberty will reconcile their minds,
And make the chains sit easy : I must cover
The pit with flow'rs, if I wou'd draw 'em to it,
And sooth the tiger e'er I bind him fast.
Yes, I will please them, ev'n whilst I oppress,
Charm, and enslave them, and revenge myself
On ev'ry foe by forcing him to love me.

ANTONY.

You must be fear'd, or you will never reign.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

In battle only Cæsar wou'd be fear'd.

ANTONY.

The people will abuse thy easy nature.

CÆSAR.

I tell thee, no; the people worship me.
Behold that temple there, which Rome has rais'd
To Cæsar's clemency.

ANTONY.

They'll raise another
Perhaps to vengeance: thou hast cause to dread
Their ranc'rous hearts, still cherish'd by despair,
Cruel by duty, and the slaves of Rome.
Cassius alarm'd foresees that Antony
This day shall place the crown on Cæsar's head,
And ev'n before thy face they murmur'd at it.
'Twere best to gain the most impetuous of them,
And win 'em to our int'rest: to prevent
All danger, Cæsar must constrain himself.

CÆSAR.

Cou'd I have fear'd, I wou'd have punish'd them;
Advise me not to make myself detested:
Cæsar has learn'd to fight, has learn'd to conquer,

But

But knows not how to punish : let us hence,
And, strangers to suspicion and revenge,
Rule without violence o'er the conquer'd world.

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II. SCENE I.

BRUTUS, ANTONY, DOLABELLA.

ANTONY

THIS bitterness of hate, this proud refusal,
Breaths less of virtue than of savage fierceness :
Cæsar's indulgence, his high rank and pow'r
At least deserv'd a milder treatment from you,
And more complacency ; you might at least
Have talk'd with him : did you know with whom
You are at variance, you wou'd shudder at it—

BRUTUS.

I shudder now ; but 'tis at hearing thee ;
Foe to thy country, which thou hast betray'd
And sold to Cæsar, think'st thou to deceive
Or to corrupt me ? go, and cringe to him,
Fawn on your haughty lord, I know your arts,
You long to be a slave ; you want a king,
Yet you are Romans.

VOL. II

I

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Brutus, I'm a friend,
And boast a heart that loves humanity :
I am contented with this humble virtue :
But thou woud'st be a hero, yet art nought
But a barbarian ; and thy savage pride
Grew fond of virtue, but to make us loath her.

SCENE II.

BRUTUS alone.

What baseness, heav'n ! what ignominious slaves !
Behold, my wretched country, your support,
Horatius, Decius, and thou great avenger
Of sacred laws, Brutus, my kindred blood,
Behold your successors ; just gods, are these
The noble reliques of our Roman grandeur ?
We kiss the hand that binds us to the yoke ;
Cæsar has ravish'd e'vn our virtues from us :
I look for Rome, but find it now no more.
O ye immortal heroes, ye who fell
In her defence, whose images now strike
My soul with awe, and fill my eyes with tears,
The family of Pompey, and thou Cato,
Thou last of Scipio's glorious race, I feel
A lively spark of your immortal virtues
Rebound from you, and animate my heart :

You

You live in Brutus still, and in his breast
 Have left the honour of the Roman name
 The tyrant wou'd have stol'n. What do I see,
 Great Pompey, at thy statue's foot? a paper.

[He takes the paper and reads,

Brutus, thou sleep'st, and Rome's in chains.

O Rome,

My eyes are ever open still for thee;
 Reproach me not for chains which I abhor.
 Another paper! *No: thou art not Brutus:*
 Cruel reflection! Tyrant Cæsar, tremble,
 This stroke must end thee: *no: thou art not Brutus,*
 I am, I will be Brutus; I will perish,
 Or set my country free: Rome still, I see,
 Has virtuous hearts: she calls for an avenger,
 And has her eyes on Brutus; she awakens
 My sleeping soul, and shakes my tardy hand:
 She calls for blood, and shall be satisfy'd.

SCENE III.

BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CINNA, CASCA, DECIMUS,
 Attendants.

CASSIUS.

'Tis the last time we may embrace, my friends,
 Bury'd beneath the ruins of his country,
 Cassius must fall; Cæsar can ne'er forgive me;

I 2

He

He knows our hearts, he knows our resolution;
Our souls, untainted by corruption, thwart
His purposes; in us he will destroy
The last of Romans: yes, my friends, 'tis past;
Our laws, our country, and our honour's lost;
Rome is no more; he triumphs over her,
And o'er mankind; our thoughtless ancestors
But fought for Cæsar, but for Cæsar conquer'd:
The spoils of kings, the sceptre of the world,
Six hundred years of virtues, toils, and war,
Were spent for Cæsar; he enjoys the fruit
Of all our dear-bought vict'ries: O, my Brutus,
Wert thou too born to crouch beneath a master?
Our liberty is gone.

BRUTUS.

It will revive.

CASSIUS.

What say'st thou? hark! did you not hear a shout?

BRUTUS.

'Twas the vile rabble: think not of them, Cassius.

CASSIUS.

Did'st thou say, liberty—that noise again!

SCENE

SCENE IV.

BRUTUS, CASSIUS, DECIMUS, CIMBER.

CASSIUS.

Ah! Cimber, is it thou? speak, what hath happen'd?

DECIMUS.

Some new attempt on liberty and Rome,
What hast thou seen?

CIMBER.

Our shame. When haughty Cæsar
Came to the temple, he look'd down upon us
Ev'n like the thund'rer, Capitolian Jove;
Then proudly told us of his bold design
Of adding Persia to the Roman empire:
The people kneel'd before their idol, call'd him
Rome's great avenger, conqu'ror of the world;
But Cæsar wanted yet another title
To gratify his insolent ambition;
When, lo! amidst this scene of adulation,
Came Antony, and buffled thro' the croud
That stood 'twixt him and Cæsar; in his hand
A crown and sceptre: when, O shameful act,
Disgraceful to a Roman! whilst we stood
In silent admiration, unabash'd,
He plac'd the crown on Cæsar's head; then kneel'd,

And cry'd out, Cæsar live and reign o'er us,
And o'er the world : our Romans, as he spake,
Turn'd pale, and with their cries tumultuous wrung
The temple's vaulted roof : some fled with terror,
Whilst others blushing stood, and wept their fate.
Cæsar, who read resentment in their looks,
And indignation but too visible,
With well-dissembled modesty, took off
The radiant crown, and roll'd it at his feet.
Instant the scene was chang'd, and ev'ry Roman
Welcom'd with smiles returning liberty,
Ill-founded hopes, and momentary joy !
Antony seem'd astonish'd : Cæsar still
Blush'd and dissembled ; and the more he strove
To hide his grief, the more was he applauded.
By moderation he wou'd veil his crimes,
Affects to scorn the crown, and spurn it from him :
But, spite of all his efforts to conceal it,
Was gall'd within to hear the people praise him
For virtues which he never will possess.
No longer able to conceal his rage
And disappointment, with contracted brow
He left the capitol, and in an hour
The senate must attend him : an hour hence
Shall Cæsar change the state of Rome : thou know'st,

O Brutus ! half our senate is corrupted,
Have bought their country, and will sell it now
To Cæsar : they are far more infamous
Ev'n than the people, who at least abhor
The name of king : Cæsar already vested
With regal pow'r, yet wishes for the crown ;
The people have refus'd him, but the senate
Bestow it on him : what remains ?

CASSIUS.

To die ;

To end a life of mis'ry and reproach :
I've dragg'd it on whilst yet a ray of hope
Dawn'd on my country, but her latest hour
Is come, and Cassius never shall survive her.
Let others weep for Rome, I can't avenge
My country's cause, but I can perish with her.
I go where all our gods—O Scipio, Pompey,
'Tis time to follow you, and imitate
Great Cato.

BRUTUS.

No : we'll not be followers,
But bright examples : the world's eye, my friends,
Is fix'd on us ; be it our part to answer
The great expectance of our bleeding country.
Had Cato ta'en my counsel, he had fall'n

More nobly, and the tyrant's blood had flow'd
Mix'd with his own : he turn'd his blameless hand
Against himself ; but little did his death
Avail mankind : Cato did all for glory,
And nothing for his country : there, my friends,
There only err'd the greatest of mankind.

CASSIUS.

What can we do in this disastrous crisis ?

BRUTUS.

[Shews the paper.

See what was wrote to me, and learn our duty.

CASSIUS.

The same reproach was sent to me.

BRUTUS.

It shews

We had deserv'd it.

CIMBER.

Quick, the fatal hour
Approaches, when a tyrant shall destroy
The Roman name : one hour, and all is gone.

BRUTUS.

One hour, and Cæsar—dies.

CASSIUS.

Ha ! now thou art

What Brutus shou'd be.

DECIMUS.

DECIMUS.

—Worthy of thy race,
The scourge of tyrants ; thou hast spoke the thoughts
Of my own heart.

CASSIUS.

O Brutus, thou reviv'st me ;
'Twas what my sorrows, what my rage expected
From thy exalted virtue ; Rome inspires
The great design ; thy voice alone decrees
The death of tyrants : O my dearest Brutus,
Let us blot out this infamous reproach
On all mankind, and whilst Jove's thunder sleeps,
Revenge the capitol. What say ye, Romans,
Have ye the same unconquerable heart,
The same desires ?

CIMBER.

Cassius, we think with you,
Despise the thought of life, abhor the tyrant ;
We love our country, and we will avenge her :
If there's a spark of Roman virtue left,
Brutus and Cassius will revive it.

DECIMUS.

Born

The guardians of the state, the great avengers
Of ev'ry crime, too long th'oppressive hand
Of pow'r hath gall'd us, and as 'twere added guilt

To spare the tyrant, or suspend the blow :
Say, whom shall we admit to share this honour ?

BRUTUS.

We are ourselves enow to save our country.
Emilius, Dolabella, Lepidus
And Bibulus, are all the slaves of Cæsar.
Cic'ro may serve us with his eloquence,
And that alone ; he can harangue the senate,
But is too timid in the hour of danger :
He'll talk for Rome, but is not fit t'avenge her :
We'll leave the orator who charms his country
The task of praising us when we have sav'd it.
With you alone, my friends, will I partake
This glorious danger, this immortal honour ;
The senate are to meet him an hour hence,
There I'll surprise, destroy him there : this sword,
Deep in his bosom bury'd, shall revenge
Cato, and Pompey, and the Roman people :
I know th' attempt is perilous and bold :
His watchful guards are plac'd on ev'ry side :
The changeful people, flutt'ring and inconstant,
Are doubtful whether they shou'd love or hate him.
Death seems, my friends, to be our certain fate :
But O ! how glorious such a death will be !

How

How much to be desir'd ! how noble is it
To fall in such a cause, to see our blood
Flow with the blood of tyrants ; with what pleasure
Shall we behold this last illustrious hour !
Yes, let us die, my friends, but die with Cæsar ;
And may that liberty his crimes oppress
Rise from his ashes, and for ever flourish !

CASSIUS.

Debate not then, but to the capitol
Let us away ; there he has injur'd us,
And there 'tis fit he shou'd be sacrific'd :
Fear not the people, tho' they're doubtful now,
Whene'er the idol falls, they will detest him.

BRUTUS.

Swear then with me upon this sword ; all swear
By Cato's blood, by Pompey's, by the shades
Of those brave Romans who in Afric's plains
Fell glorious ; swear by all th' avenging gods
Of Rome, that Cæsar by your hands shall die.

CASSIUS.

Let us do more, my friends ; here let us swear
To root out all who, like himself, shall strive
To govern here : sons, brothers, fathers, all,
If they are tyrants, Brutus, are our foes :
A true republican has neither son,

Father,

Father, nor brother, but the common-weal,
His gods, the laws, his virtue, and his country.

BRUTUS.

For ever let me join my blood with yours ;
All link'd together in one sacred knot,
Th' adopted sons of Liberty and Rome,
We'll seal our union with the tyrant's blood.

[Advancing towards the statue of Pompey.

By you, illustrious heroes, who excite
Our duty, and inspire the great design,
O Pompey, at thy sacred knees, we swear,
Nought for ourselves we do, but all for Rome,
We swear to be united for our country ;
We swear to live, to fight, and die together.
Let us be gone : away : we've staid too long.

SCENE V.

CÆSAR, BRUTUS.

CÆSAR.

Stop, Brutus, I must talk with thee ; attend :
Where woud'st thou fly ?

BRUTUS.

From tyranny, and thee.

CÆSAR.

Lictors, detain him.

BRUTUS.

Thou woud'st have my life,

Take it.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

No : Brutus, had I wanted that,
Thou know'st, I could command it with a word,
And thou hast merited no better fate :
It is the pride of thy ungrateful heart
Still to offend me ; and I find thee here
Amongst those Romans whose dark perfidy
I most suspect, with those who proudly dar'd
To blame my conduct, and defy my pow'r.

BRUTUS.

'They talk'd like Romas, gave thee noble counsel ;
Had'st thou been wise, thou wou'd'st have follow'd it.

CÆSAR.

Yet I'll be calm, and bear thy insolence,
Will stoop beneath myself, and talk to thee.
What lay'st thou to my charge ?

BRUTUS.

A ravag'd world,
The blood of nations, and thy plunder'd country ;
Thy pow'r, thy specious virtues that gild o'er
Thy crimes, thy fatal clemency, that makes
Thy chains so easy, a destructive charm
To sooth thy captives, and deceive mankind.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

Reproach like this had suited Pompey well ;
He whose dissembled virtues have betray'd thee,
That haughty citizen, more fatal far,
Wou'd not admit ev'n Cæsar as his equal.
Think'st thou, if he had conquer'd, his proud soul
Had left secure the liberty of Rome ?
He wou'd have rul'd you with a rod of iron,
What then had Brutus done ?

BRUTUS.

He wou'd have slain him.

CÆSAR.

Is that the fate which Cæsar must expect
From thee ? thou answer'st not. O Brutus, Brutus,
Thou liv'st but for my ruin.

BRUTUS.

If thou think'st so,
Prevent my fury : what witholds thee ?

CÆSAR.

[Giving him the letter from Servilia.

Nature,

And my own heart: read there, ungrateful, read
And know whose blood thou hast oppos'd to mine ;
See whom thou hat'st, and if thou dar'st, go on.

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

[Reading.]

What have I read ? where am I ? do my eyes
Deceive me ?

CÆSAR.

Now my son, my Brutus.

BRUTUS.

Cæsar

My father, gracious gods !

CÆSAR.

Ungrateful, yes

I am thy father : whence this deadly silence ?

Why sobb'st thou thus, my son ? Why do I hold thee

Thus in my arms mute and insensible ?

Nature alarms, but cannot soften thee.

BRUTUS.

O dreadful fate ! it drives me to despair :

My oaths ! my country ! Rome for ever dear !

Cæsar—alas ! I've liv'd too long.

CÆSAR.

O speak,

I see thy heart is lab'ring with remorse

And anguish : O hide nothing from me : still

Thou'rt silent : does the sacred name of son

Offend thee, Brutus ? art thou fearful of it ?

Fear'st thou to love me, to partake my fortunes ?

Is Cæsar's blood so hateful to thee ! Oh

This

This sceptre of the world, this pow'r supreme,
 For thee alone, that Cæsar, whom thou hat'st,
 Desir'd them : with Octavius and thyself
 I wish'd but to divide the rich reward
 Of all my labours, and the name of king.

BRUTUS.

O gods !

CÆSAR.

Thou can'st not speak : these transports, Brutus,
 Spring they from hatred, or from tenderness ?
 What secret weight hangs heavy on thy soul ?

BRUTUS.

Cæsar—

CÆSAR.

Well, what ?

BRUTUS.

I cannot speak to him.

CÆSAR.

Thou seem'st as if thou durst not call me father.

BRUTUS.

O, if thou art my father, grant me this,
 This only boon.

CÆSAR.

Ask it : to give it thee

Will make me happy.

BRUTUS.

Kill me then this moment,

Or wish no more to be a king.

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

Away

Barbarian, hence ! unworthy of my love,
Unworthy of thy race, thou art no more
My son : go, henceforth I disclaim thee ;
My heart shall take example from thy own,
And stifle nature's voice ; shall learn of thee
To be inhuman : hence, I know thee not.
Think not I mean again to supplicate,
No, thou shalt see I've pow'r to crush you all :
I will no longer listen to the pleas
Of mercy, but obey the laws of justice ;
My easy heart is weary of forgiveness :
I'll act like Sylla now, like him be cruel,
And make you tremble at my vengeance : go,
Find out your vile seditious friends, they all
Insulted me, and all shall suffer for it :
They know what Cæsar can do, and shall find
What Cæsar dare : if I am barbarous,
Remember, thou alone hast made me so.

BRUTUS.

I must not leave him to his cruel purpose,
But save, if possible, my friends, and Cæsar.

END of the SECOND ACT.

A C T

CASSIUS, CIMBER, DECIMUS, CINNA, CASCAS,
with the rest of the Conspirators.

CASSIUS

At length the hour is come when Rome again
Shall breath, again shall flourish; unoppress'd
By tyrants, soon the mistress of the world
To freedom and to fame shall be restor'd.
Yours is the honour, Decimus, and Casca,
Cimber, and Probus, but one hour and Cæsar
Shall be no more: what Cato, Pompey, all
The pow'r of Asia, never cou'd perform,
We, my brave friends, alone shall execute;
We will avenge our country: on this day
Thus may we speak to all mankind: *Henceforth*
Respect the state of Rome, for she is free.

CIMBER.

Behold thy friends all ready to obey thee;
To live or die with thee; to serve the senate;
To take the tyrant's life, or lose their own.

DECIMUS.

But where is Brutus, Cæsar's deadliest foe,
He who assembled, he who made us swear,

Who

Who first shall plunge the dagger in his breast,
Why comes he not? the son-in-law of Cato
Shou'd not have tarry'd thus; he may be stopp'd;
Cæsar perhaps may know—but see he comes;
Gods! what dejection in his aspect!

SCENE II.

BRUTUS, the rest of the Conspirators.

CASSIUS.

Brutus,

What sinks thee thus? what new misfortune? say,
Doth Cæsar know it all? is Rome betray'd?

BRUTUS.

He knows not our design upon his life,
But trusts to you.

DECIMUS.

What then hath troubled thee?

BRUTUS.

A dreadful secret, that will make you tremble.

CASSIUS.

Cæsar's approaching death! perhaps our own!
Brutus, we all can die, but shall not tremble.

BRUTUS.

I will unveil it, and astonish thee.

Cæsar thou know'st is Brutus' foe; I've sworn

To

To kill him, fix'd the time, the place, the moment
Of his destruction: 'tis but what I owe
To Rome, to you, and your posterity,
Nay, to the happiness of all mankind,
And the first blow must come from Brutus' hand:
All is prepar'd : and now let me inform thee,
That Brutus is — his son,

CIMBER.

The son of Cæsar !

CASSIUS.

His son !

DECIMUS.

O Rome !

BRUTUS.

Yes : Cæsar and Servilia,

Marry'd in private, Brutus was the fruit
Of their unhappy nuptials.

CIMBER.

Art thou then

A tyrant's son ?

CASSIUS.

It cannot, must not be :

Thou art too much a Roman.

BRUTUS.

'Tis too true ;

Ye see my friends the horror of my fate :

But I am yours, for sacred is my word :

Which

Which of you all hath strength of mind sufficient,
With more than stoic courage, far above
The common race of men, to tell me how
Brutus shou'd act? I yeild me to your sentence:
All silent! all with down cast eyes! thou, Cassius,
Wilt not thou speak? no friendly hand stretch'd out
To save me from this horrid precipice!

BRUTUS.

Cassius, thou tremblest; thy astonish'd soul—

CASSIUS.

I tremble at the counsel I must give.

BRUTUS.

Yet speak.

CASSIUS.

Were Brutus one amongst the croud
Of vulgar citizens, I shou'd have said,
Go, be a brother tyrant, serve thy father,
Destroy that country which thou shoud'st support,
Rome shall hereafter be reveng'd on both:
But I am talking to the noble Brutus,
The scourge of tyrants, whose conquer'd heart
Hath not a drop of Cæsar's blood within it:
Thou knew'st the traitor Catiline, whose rage
Was well nigh fatal to us all.

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

I did.

CASSIUS.

If on the day when that abhorred monster
Levell'd the blow at liberty and Rome,
If when the senate had condemn'd the traitor
He had acknowledg'd Brutus for his son,
How woud'st thou then have acted?

BRUTUS.

Can'st thou ask me?

Think'st thou, my heart, thus in a moment chang'd,
Cou'd ballance 'twixt a traitor and my country!

CASSIUS.

Brutus, that word alone points out thy duty :
It is the senate's will, and Rome's in safety.
But say, hast thou indeed those secret checks
Which vulgar minds mistake for nature's voice,
And shall a word from Cæsar thus extinguish
Thy love for Rome, thy duty, and thy faith?
Or true or false the secret that he told thee,
Is he less guilty, art thou less a Roman,
Art thou not Brutus, tho' the son of Cæsar?
Is not hand, thy heart, thy honour pledg'd
To us and to thy country? If thou art

Th

The tyrant's son, Rome is thy mother still,
We are thy brothers. Born as Brutus was
Within these sacred walls, th' adopted son
Of Cato, bred by Scipio and by Pompey,
The friend of Cassius, what woud'st thou desire?
These are thy noblest titles, and another
Wou'd but disgrace them : what if Cæsar, smit
With lawless passion for the fair Servilia,
Seduced her to his arms, and gave thee birth,
Bury thy mother's follies in oblivion :
Twas Cato form'd thy noble soul to virtue,
And Cato is thy father ; therefore loose
The shameful tie that binds thee to another :
Firm to thy oaths and to thy cause remain,
And own no parents but the world's avengers.

BRUTUS.

My noble friends, to you I next appeal.

CIMBER.

By Cassius judge of us, by us of Cassius :
Cou'd we think otherwise, of all Rome's sons
We were most guilty : but why ask of us
What thy own breast can best inform thee ? Brutus
Alone can tell what Brutus ought to do.

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

Now then, my friends, I'll lay my heart before you,
With all its horrors; O 'tis deeply wounded,
And tears have flow'd ev'n from a stoick's eye:
After the dreadful oath which I have made
To serve my country, and to kill my father,
I weep to see myself the son of Cæsar,
Admire his virtues, and condemn his crimes,
Lament the hero, and abhor the tyrant,
Pity and horror rend my troubled soul;
I wish that fate you have prepar'd for him
Wou'd fall on Brutus: but I'll tell you more,
Know, I esteem him, and 'midst all his crimes,
His nobleness of heart has won me to him:
If Rome cou'd e'er submit to regal pow'r,
He is the only tyrant we shou'd spare.
Be not alarm'd; that name alone secures me,
Rome and the senate have my faith, the welfare
Of all mankind declares against a king.
Yes, I embrace the virtuous task with horror,
And tremble at it, but I will be faithful:
I go to talk with Cæsar, and perhaps
To change and soften him, perhaps to save
Rome and himself: O may the gods bestow
Persuasive utt'rance on my lips, and pow'r

To

To move his soul ; but if in vain I plead
The cause of liberty, if Cæsar still
Is deaf to my intreaties, strike, destroy him,
I'll not betray my country for my father ;
The world, astonish'd, may approve or blame
My cruel firmness, and this deed hereafter
Be call'd a deed of horror, or of glory ;
My soul is not ambitious of applause,
Or fearful of reproach ; a Roman still,
And independent, to the voice of duty
And that alone I listen ; for the rest,
'Tis equal all ; away ; be slaves no longer.

CASSIUS.

The welfare of the state depends on thee,
And on thy sacred word we shall rely,
As if great Cato and the gods of Rome
Had promis'd to defend us.

SCENE III.

BRUTUS alone.

Cæsar comes

Ev'n now to meet me, 'tis th' appointed hour,
And this the place, ev'n in the capitol,
Where he must die : let me not hate him, gods !

VOL. II.

K

O stop

O stop this arm uplifted to destroy him,
Inspire his noble heart with love of Rome,
And if he is my father, make him just!
He comes: I have not pow'r to speak, or move,
Great spirit of Cato, now support my virtue!

SCENE IV.

CÆSAR, BRUTUS.

CÆSAR.

Brutus, we're met: what woud'st thou? hast thou yet
A human heart? art thou the son of Cæsar.

BRUTUS.

I am, if Cæsar be the son of Rome.

CÆSAR.

Was it for this, thou proud republican,
We met together? com'st thou to insult me?
Not all my bounties shoud upon thy head,
Glory and empire, and a subject world,
Waiting to pay thee homage, nought can move
Thy stubborn heart: what think'st thou of a crown?

BRUTUS.

I think on it with horror.

CÆSAR

CÆSAR.

Prejudice

And passion blind thee, I excuse thy weakness;
But can'st thou hate me?

BRUTUS.

No: I love thee, Cæsar;

Thy noble deeds long since inclin'd my heart
To rev'rence thee; before thou had'st disclos'd
The secret of my birth, I wept to see thee
At once the glory and the scourge of Rome:
Wou'd Cæsar be a Roman citizen,
I shou'd adore him, and wou'd sacrifice
My life and fortune to defend his cause;
But Cæsar, as a king, I must abhor.

CÆSAR.

What do'st thou hate me for?

BRUTUS.

Thy tyranny.

O listen to the counsel, to the pray'rs,
The tears of Rome, the senate, and thy son;
Wou'dst thou desire to be the first of men?
Wou'dst thou enjoy a right superior far
To all that war and conquest can bestow?
Wou'dst thou be more than king, nay more than
Cæsar — —

K 2

CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

What's to be done ?

BRUTUS.

Thou see'st the world enslav'd,
Bound to thy chariot, break their chains in sunder,
Renounce the diadem, and be a Roman.

CÆSAR.

What hast thou bade me do ?

BRUTUS.

What Sylla did
Before thee ; he had waded in our blood,
He made Rome free, and all was soon forgotten ;
Deep as his hands were dipp'd in deadly slaughter,
He left the throne, and wash'd his crimes away.
Thou hast not Sylla's cruelty and rage,
Adopt his virtues then ; thy heart, we know,
Can pardon, therefore can thy heart do more ;
'Tis Rome thou must forgive : then shalt thou reign
As Cæsar shou'd, then Brutus is thy son :
Still do I plead in vain ?

CÆSAR.

Rome wants a master,
As one day thou perhaps may'st plainly prove.
Brutus, our laws shou'd with our manners change ;
That liberty thou dot'st on is no more

Than

Than the fool's right to hurt himself, and Rome,
That spread destruction round the world, now seems
To work her own; the great Colossus falls,
And in her ruin buries half mankind:
To me she stretches forth her feeble arm
To aid her in her perils. Since the days
Of Sylla, all our virtue's lost; the laws,
Rome, and the state, are nought but empty names.
Alas! thou talk'st in these corrupted times
As if the Decii, and Æmilii liv'd;
Cato deceiv'd thee, and thy fatal virtue
Will but destroy thy country, and thyself;
Submit thy reason to the conqueror
Of Cato and of Pompey, to a father
Who loves thee, Brutus, who laments thy errors;
Give me thy heart, and be indeed my son:
Take other steps, and force not nature thus
Against thyself: not answer me, my Brutus,
But turn thy eyes away!

BRUTUS.

I'm not my self:

Strike me, ye gods! O Cæsar——

CÆSAR.

Thou art mov'd,

I see thou art, my son; thy soften'd soul——

K 3

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

Thy life's in danger ; know'st thou that, my father ?
Know'st thou, there's not a Roman then but wishes
In secret to destroy thee ? let thy own,
Thy country's safety, plead my cause : by me
Thy genius speaks, it throws me at thy feet,
And presses for thy welfare ; in the name
Of all those gods thou hast so late forgotten,
Of all thy virtues, in the name of Rome ;
Shall I yet add the tender name of son,
A son who trembles for thee, who prefers
To Cæsar Rome alone, O hear, and save me !

CÆSAR.

Leave me, my Brutus, leave me.

BRUTUS.

Be persuaded.

CÆSAR.

The world may change, but Cæsar never will.

BRUTUS.

This is thy answer then ?

CÆSAR.

I am resolv'd ;

Rome must obey, when Cæsar hath determin'd.

BRUTUS.

Then fare thee well.

CÆSAR.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

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CÆSAR.

Ha ! wherefore ? stay, my son,
Thou weep'st, can Brutus weep ? is it because
Thou ha'st a king ? dost thou lament for Rome ?

BRUTUS.

I weep for thee, and thee alone ; farewell !

[Exit Brutus.]

CÆSAR.

Heroic virtue ! how I envy Brutus !
Wou'd I cou'd love like him the commonweal !

SCENE V.

CÆSAR, DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar, the senate, at the temple met
By thy command, await thee, and the throne
Already is prepar'd, the people throng
Around thy statues, and the senate fix
Their wav'ring minds ; but, if I might be heard,
If Cæsar wou'd give ear to one who loves him,
A fellow-soldier and a friend, to augurs,
To dreadful omens, to the gods themselves,
He wou'd defer the great event.

CÆSAR.

Away :

K 4

Defer

Defer such glorious business ! lose a crown,
What pow'r shall stop me ?

DOLABELLA.

Nature doth conspire
With heav'n to blast thy purpose, and foretell
Thy death.

CÆSAR.

No matter, Cæsar's but a man ;
Nor do I think that heav'n wou'd e'er disturb
The course of nature, or the elements
Rise in confusion, to prolong the life
Of one poor mortal ; by th' immortal gods
Our days are number'd ; we must yield to fate ;
Cæsar has nought to fear.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar has foes,
And this new yoke may gall them ; what if these
Conspire against thee !

CÆSAR.

O, they dare not do it.

DOLABELLA.

Thy heart's too confident.

CÆSAR.

Such poor precautions

Wou'd

Wou'd make me look contemptible, perhaps
Wou'd do me little service.

DOLABELLA.

For Rome's safety
Cæsar shou'd live : at least permit thy friend
T'attend thee to the senate.

CÆSAR.

No : why alter
Our first resolve ? why hasten the decrees
Of fate ? who changes only shews his weakness.

DOLABELLA.

I quit thee with regret, and own I fear.
Alas ! my heart beats heavily.

CÆSAR.

Away.

Better to die than be afraid of death :
Farewell.

SCENE VI.

DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

DOLABELLA.

What hero better cou'd deserve
The homage of mankind ? O join with me,
Ye Romans, to admire and honour Cæsar ;

Live to obey, and die to serve him—heav'n!
What noise is that, what dreadful clamours!

The CONSPIRATORS, behind the scenes.

Die,

Die, tyrant : courage, Cassius.

DOLABELLA.

Fly, and save him.

SCENE II.

CASSIUS, a dagger in his hand, DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

CASSIUS.

The deed is done : he's dead.

DOLABELLA.

Assist me, Romans,

Strike, kill the traitor.

CASSIUS.

Hear me, countrymen,

I am your friend, and your deliverer,

Have broke your chains, and set the nation free :

The conqu'rors of the world are now the sons

Of liberty.

DOLABELLA.

O ! Romans, shall the blood

Of Cæsar—

CASSIUS.

I have slain my friend, to serve

The

The cause of Rome ; he wou'd have made you slaves,
And therefore have I slain him : is there one,
Amongst you all, so base, so mean of soul,
As to be fond of slav'ry, and regret
A tyrant's loss ? is there one Roman left
That wishes for a king ? if one there be,
Let him appear, let him complain to Cassius ;
But ye are fond of glory all, I know
Ye are, and will applaud me for the deed.

ROMANS.

Perish his mem'ry ! Cæsar was a tyrant.

CASSIUS.

Preserve these gen'rous sentiments, ye sons
Of happy Rome, ye masters of the world ;
Antony means, I know, to tamper with you,
But you'll remember, he was Cæsar's slave,
Bred up beneath him from his infant years,
And in corruption's school has learn'd from him
The tyrant's art ; he comes to vindicate
His master, and to justify his crimes ;
Contemns you all, and thinks he can deceive you ;
He has a right to speak, and must be heard,
Such is the law of Rome, and to the laws
I shall submit ; but in the people still

Is lodg'd the pow'r supreme, to judge of Cæsar,
 Of Antony, and me : ye now once more
 Possess those rights which had been wrested from you,
 Which Cæsar took, and Cassius hath restor'd :
 He will confirm them : but I go, my friends,
 To meet great Brutus at the capitol ;
 To those deserted walls once more to bring
 Long absent justice, and our exil'd gods ;
 To calm the rage of faction, and repair
 The ruins of our liberty : for you,
 I ask you but to know your happiness,
 And to enjoy it : let no artifice
 Deceive you, but beware of Antony.

ROMANS.

If he speak ill of Cassius, he shall die.

CASSIUS.

Romans, remember these your sacred oaths.

ROMANS.

The friends of Rome shall ever be our care.

SCENE VIII.

ANTONY, ROMANS, DOLABELLA.

First ROMAN,

But Antony appears.

Second

Second ROMAN.

What can he dare
To offer?

First ROMAN.

See, his eyes are bath'd in tears :
Hark how he sighs, he's deeply troubled,

Second ROMAN.

O,

He lov'd him but too well.

ANTONY.

I did indeed :

I lov'd him, Romans, wou'd have giv'n my life
To save my friend's ; and who amongst you all
Wou'd not have dy'd for Cæsar, had you known,
Like me, his virtues ? to the laws he fell
A noble sacrifice : I come not here
To gild his mem'ry with a flatt'ring tale,
The world was witness to his deeds, the world
Proclaims his glory ; I but ask your pity,
And beg you to forgive the tears of friendship.

First ROMAN.

Cassius, you might have shed them for your country,
For Rome in slav'ry ; Cæsar was a hero,
But Cæsar was a tyrant too.

Second ROMAN.

A tyrant

Cou'd

Cou'd have no virtues : Cassius was our friend,
And so was Brutus.

ANTONY.

I have nought to urge
Against his murtherers ; they meant, no doubt,
To serve the state ; whilst gen'rous Cæsar pour'd
His bounties on their heads, they shed his blood ;
But, had he not been guilty, Rome wou'd ne'er
Have acted thus, he must have been to blame :
And yet did Cæsar ever make you groan
Beneath his pow'r ? did he oppress his country ?
Did he reserve the fruit of all his conquests
But for himself, or did you share the spoil ?
Were not the treasures of the conquer'd world
Laid at your feet, and lavish'd all on you ?
When he beheld his weeping countrymen,
From his triumphal car he wou'd descend
To sooth their griefs, and wipe their tears away.
What Cæsar fought for, Rome in peace enjoys ;
Rich by his bounty, by his virtues great ;
He paid the service and forgot the wrongs
Which he receiv'd ; immortal gods ! you knew
His heart was ever ready to forgive.

ROMANS.

Cæsar was always merciful.

ANTO.

ANTONY.

Alas!

Cou'd his great soul have ever stoop'd to vengeance
He yet had liv'd, and we had still been happy.
Not one of all his murtherers but shar'd
His bounties; twice had he preserv'd the life
Of Cassius — Brutus — horrible to think!
O, heav'n! my friends, I shudder at the crime,
The base assassin, Brutus, was — his son.

ROMANS.

His son! ye gods!

ANTONY.

I see, it shocks your souls,
I see the tears trickle down your cheeks:
Yes; Brutus is his son: but you, my friends,
You were his children, his adopted sons:
O, had ye seen his will!

ROMANS.

What is it? tell us.

ANTONY.

Rome is his heir; his treasures are your own,
And you will soon enjoy them: O, he wish'd
To serve his Romans, ev'n beyond the grave:
'Twas you alone he lov'd, for you had gone
To sacrifice his fortune and his life

In

In Asia's plains : O, Romans, oft he cry'd,
 You are my sov'reigns, I am the world's master,
 And you are mine. Cou'd Brutus have done more,
 Or Cassius ?

ROMANS.

We detest them :

First ROMAN.

Cæsar was

The father of his country.

ANTONY.

But he's gone ;

Your father is no more : the pride, the glory
 Of human nature, the delight of Rome,
 Cut off by vile assassins ; shall he go
 Unhonour'd, undistinguish'd to the tomb ?
 Shall we not raise the fun'ral pile to one
 So dear, the father, and the friend of Rome ?
 Behold, they bring him here.

[The further part of the stage opens, and discovers the lic-
 tors carrying the body of Cæsar, cover'd with a bloody
 robe ; Antony descends from the rostrum, and kneels down
 near the body.]

ROMANS.

O dreadful sight !

ANTONY.

Behold the poor remains of Cæsar ! once
 The first of men, that god whom you ador'd,

Whom

Whom ev'n his murth'ers lov'd, your best support,
In peace your guardian, and in war your glory,
Who made whole nations tremble, and the world
Bow down before him : is this he, ye Romans,
This bleeding corpse, is this the mighty Cæsar ?
Mark but his wounds : *here Cimber pierc'd him, there
The perjur'd Cassius, and there Decimus ;
There, with unnat'ral hand, the cruel Brutus
Deep plung'd the fatal poniard : Cæsar look'd
Towards his murth'rer, with an eye of love
And mild forgiveness, as he sunk in death
He call'd him by the tender name of son ;
My child, he cry'd —

First ROMAN.

The monster ! O that heav'n
Had ta'en him hence before this fatal deed !

[The people croud round the body.

The blood still flows.

ANTONY.

O ! it cries out for vengeance :
From you demands it : hearken to the voice ;

* The reader will perceive how closely Voltaire has here follow'd Shakespear, and at the same time must observe how inferior the copy is to the great original.

Awake, ye Romans, hence, and follow me
Against these vile assassins ; the best tribute
That we can pay to Cæsar's memory,
Is to extirpate these usurpers : haste,
And with the torch that lights his fun'ral pile
Set fire to ev'ry traitor's house, and plunge
Your daggers in their breasts : away, my friends,
Let us avenge him ; let us offer up
These bloody victims to the gods of Rome.

ROMAN.

We follow thee, and swear by Cæsar's blood
To be reveng'd : away.

ANTONY.

[To Dolabella,

We must not let
Their anger cool, the multitude we know
Is ever wav'ring, fickle and inconstant :
We'll urge them to a war, and then perhaps
Who best revenges Cæsar may succeed him.

END of the THIRD and last ACT.



A M E L I A:

OR THE

DUKE OF FOIX.

A

T R A G E D Y.

Represented in December, 1752.



P R E F A C E.

THIS tragedy is founded on historical truth
A Duke of Britany, in the year 1387, commanded the lord of *Bavalan*, to assassinate the constable of *Cliffon*: *Bavalan*, the day after, told the duke it was done : the duke becoming sensible of the horror of his crime, and apprehensive of the fatal consequences of it, abandon'd himself to the most violent despair; *Bavalan*, after giving him time to repent, at length told him that he lov'd him well enough to disobey his orders, &c.

The action is transported to another age and country for particular reasons.

D R A-

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The DUKE of FOIX.

AMELIA.

VAMIR, Brother to the Duke of Foix.

LISOIS.

THAIS, Confidant of Amelia.

EMAR, Friend of Vamir.

SCENE, the PALACE of the DUKE of FOIX.

AMELIA:

A M E L I A :

O R, T H E

D U K E O F F O I X.

A

T R A G E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

A M E L I A, L I S O I S.

L I S O I S.

PErmit a soldier, in this feat of war,
To steal a moment from the battle's rage,
And greet the fair Amelia; to the king
Thy noble heart is bound, I know, by ties
Of dearest friendship; long and faithfully
Hath Lisois serv'd the valiant duke of Foix
Who holds thee here a pris'ner: well I know
The violence of his passion for Amelia,

Foresee

Foresee the dreadful consequence, and come,
With all the warmth of friendship, to advise
And to consult, to lay my heart before thee,
Perhaps 'tis not unworthy of thy notice.

A M E L I A.

The seal of truth is ever on thy lips,
I know thy firm integrity; whate'er
Thou say'st, I shall believe.

L I S O I S.

Know then, tho' long
I've serv'd the duke with most unweary'd zeal,
Through years of peril, and unnumber'd toils,
Yet cou'd I ne'er approve the fatal league
That bound him to the Moor, and took from France
The noblest of her princes; in these days
Of public discord, I have rang'd myself
Beneath no banners but what honour rais'd,
And follow'd but the dictates of my heart :
Not that, the slave of prejudice, my soul
Is blind to all the errors of a friend ;
With grief I see the duke's impatient warmth,
Th' impetuous ardor of his boiling youth,
I cannot shut my eyes against his follies :
Oft times the torrent which I strive to stop

Mocks

THE DUKE OF FOIX. 219

Mocks my weak pow'r, and throws down all before it;
But he has virtues that will recompense
His worst of faults: if we must follow none
But perfect princes, whose unbiass'd hearts
Are free from ev'ry vice, and ev'ry weakness,
Whom shall we serve? I love the duke; and yet
'Tis with regret I draw the hostile sword
'Gainst France: I wish he cou'd be reconcil'd.

AMELIA.

If that cou'd e'er be done, thy influence best
Might reunite them: if he loves his glory,
Sure this misguided prince will listen to thee.
How fatal has his error been!

LISOIS.

In vain

I've try'd to bend his haughty spirit; oft
Have I with harsh unwelcome truths attack'd him,
And sorely pierc'd his heart: but thou alone
Can'st bring him to his duty and his king:
That was my errand here: there was a time
When on the fair Amelia I had plac'd
My hopes of bliss; without abasement then
I thought you might have listen'd to my vows;
But heav'n reserv'd thee for a nobler fate.

VOL. II.

L

Whilst

Whilst I was absent, by the cruel Moors
Thou wert enslav'd; the happy conqu'ror came,
The gallant Foix, and sav'd thee from their rage;
His was the glory, his be the reward:
His claims are strong, his youth, his rank, and pow'r,
His fame, and services, all plead for him;
Amelia's justice and her gratitude
Must bind her to him: I have no pretence,
And therefore I am silent; but if merit
Cou'd make thee mine, I wou'd dispute the prize
Ev'n with the sons of kings, nor yield Amelia
To any but to him: he is my master,
My leader, and my friend; he loves me well:
I am not a half proud half virtuous lover,
But what I still wou'd litigate with pow'r,
I give to friendship: nay, I can do more,
I can subdue the weakness of my heart,
And plead a rival's cause; point out the path
Of glory to thee, shew thee what is due
To that illustrious hero who preserv'd thee,
By whom thou liv'st: I can behold unmov'd,
And with unenvying eye, thy charms bestow'd
On him who best deserves them: take my heart
Between you, and accept my honest service.
This arm shall fight for both; I sacrifice

My passions to your int'rest : friendship bids me,
And I obèy ; my country too commands :
Remember, if the prince is yours, he soon
Will be the king's.

AMELIA.

Thy virtues, noble youth,
Astonish me ; thou giv'st th' admiring world
A rare example ; canst thou be sincere ?
And sure thou art so, thus to conquer love,
And give up all to friendship ! all who know
Must wonder at thee : thou hast serv'd thy master,
And can'st not be an enemy to mine :
A heart so gen'rous sure must think with me :
'Tis not in souls like thine to hate their king.
Shall I then ask one favour at thy hands ?

LISOIS.

Amelia's orders shall be ever sacred :
Command, and I obey.

AMELIA.

Thy gen'rous counsel
Hath urg'd me to accept a noble rank
I look'd not for, and offer'd by a prince :
The choice, I own, does honour to Amelia,
When I reflect, that, long before he told

L 2

His

His love, he sav'd my liberty and life;
Foe to his sovereign, tho' the rebel Moor
Hath drawn him from his duty and allegiance,
Yet he has pour'd so many favors on me,
I cannot bear to hurt him, tho', in spite
Of all his goodness, and my gratitude,
I must refuse him: his unhappy passion
Afflicts me; 'tis distressful to my heart,
For all his kindness thus to make him wretched.
Fain wou'd I spare myself th' ungrateful task
Of saying that I must not hear his vows:
It is not for my feeble voice to tell
A prince his duty; 'twere a dangerous pow'r,
And I am far from wishing to enjoy it;
Who can direct him better than thyself?
Alas! my lord, 'tis not a time for love;
The royal army at our gates, and nought
But war and slaughter all around us: blood
On every side! himself against my master,
Against his brother, now in arms; all these
Are pow'rful reasons: O, my lord, in you
Is all my hope; forgive me; O complete
The gen'rous work, restore me to my king;
Let him do that, 'tis all I ask; but add
This effort more to what thou'lt done already:

Thou

Thou hast the strongest influence o'er his heart,
A firm and manly soul ; a friend like thee,
Respected and belov'd, will make the voice
Of duty heard, his counsels will be laws.

L I S O I S.

Alas! those counsels will have little weight
Against the passions that possess his soul ;
His fiery temper gives me too much cause
To fear him : he's inclin'd to jealousy,
And if he hears I had a thought of thee,
'Twill drive his soul to madness, and perhaps
Undo us all : he must be sooth'd by art ;
Leave him to me, and try to reconcile
Your jarring int'rests ; weigh his offers well.
Henceforth I'll think no more of love and thee,
But get me to the field, the soldier's duty
Shall engross me : if thou lov'st thy country,
If France be dear to thee, restore her hero,
And she will bless thee for the deed : farewell.

L 3

S C E N E

S C E N E II.

A M E L I A, T H A I S.

A M E L I A.

Restore him, said he ? what ! at that dear price
Of all my happiness ! it cannot be ;
'Twere infamous and base, the worst of crimes.

T H A I S.

But wherefore is the prince thus hateful to you ?
Why in these days of discord, war, and tumult,
Whilst faction reigns, and on our royal race
Brother 'gainst brother arms, and ev'ry hour
Brings new afflictions, wherefore shou'd Amelia,
Whose gentler stars for other purposes
Had form'd her soul, to love and to be lov'd,
Why shou'd Amelia, with such sentiments
Of scorn and hatred, meet a hero's vows
Who had aveng'd her cause ? The prince, thou know'st,
Amongst his ancestors can boast the blood
Of our first kings, and is himself a lord
Of rich domains, and wide-extended pow'r.
He loves you, offers you his hand : can rank
And title, objects that are envy'd still
By all mankind, pursued with eagerness,

And

And gain'd with rapture, can these only fill
Thy heart with sorrow, and thy eyes with tears?

AMELIA.

Because he sav'd me once, has he a right
Now to oppress me? Must Amelia fall
A victim to his fatal aid? I know
I'm much indebted to him, wou'd I were not!

THAIS.

Nay, that's ungrateful.

AMELIA.

Thou shalt know my heart.

My miseries, my duty, and my fate :
I will no longer keep the secret from thee,
'Twere cruel to distrust thee ; when thou know'st
My story, thou may'st justify thy friend.
I must not listen to the prince's vows,
For know, my heart is given to his brother.

THAIS.

Ha ! to the noble Vamir !

AMELIA.

Yes, my friend :

With mutual oaths we seal'd our mutual faith,
And at Leucate I expected him,

L 4

There

There to confirm it at the holy altar,
 When by the cruel Moors that rush'd upon us
 I was surpris'd, and made a captive ; then
 The prince, to these unconquer'd savages
 In firm alliance bound, appear'd, and sav'd me ;
 There's my distress : the life another sav'd
 Must be devoted to the faithful Vamir.

T H A I S.

But why then thus conceal thy passion ? why
 Nourish a hopeless flame thou shoud'st extinguish ?
 He wou'd respect this sacred tie, and check
 His fruitless passion.

A M E L I A.

O I must not tell him :

The brothers, to complete my sorrows, arm'd
 Against each other, have ta'en different parties
 In this destructive war ; the faithful Vamir
 Fights for his king. Thou know'st the violence
 Of his proud rival : all I can oppose
 To his fierce rage is melancholy silence ;
 Ev'n yet he knows not that in happier times
 The gallant Vamir had engag'd my heart :
 To tell it him wou'd fire his jealous soul,
 And only make Amelia more unhappy.
 'Tis time to quit this fatal place, the king

With

With pleasure will receive me : let us hence,
 The pris'ners, Thais, from these walls ev'n now
 Are breaking forth, and meditate their flight :
 They will conduct us : I defy all danger,
 Will hazard all for freedom and repose.

THAIS.

Behold the Duke.

AMELIA.

I cannot speak to him,
 The starting tear wou'd soon betray me : what
 Wou'd I not give for ever to avoid him !

SCENE III.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS, THAIS.

DUKE.

[to Thais.]

Avoid me ! fly me ! 'Thais, stay : thou know'st
 My sorrows, know'st I love her to distraction ;
 My life depends on her : but let her not
 Abuse her pow'r, and drive me to despair :
 I hate her cold respect, her poor return
 Of gratitude to all my warmth of passion :
 Delay is cruel, 'tis the worst refusal ;
 'Tis an affront my heart will ne'er forgive :
 In vain she boasts to me her loyal zeal,
 Her fond attachments to her royal master,

L 5

'Tis

'Tis time that all shou'd yield to love and me :
 Here let her find her country and her king ;
 To me she owes her honour, and her life ;
 And I owe all to her, I owe my love :
 United as we are by ev'ry claim,
 We must not part, the altar is prepar'd,
 She shall be mine ; go, tell her all is ready.

S C E N E IV.

The DUKE, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

My lord, remember that our kingdom's safety
 Depends on this decisive day.

DUKE.

I know it

And am resolv'd to conquer or to die
 Amelia's husband.

LISOIS.

But the foe advances,

And soon will be upon us.

DUKE.

Let him come,

I mean to fight him ; think'st thou I'm a coward ?
 Think'st thou the tyrant love shall e'er extinguish
 My noble thirst of glory ? though she hates,
 She shall admire me still : she boasts indeed

Her

Her sov'reign empire o'er my captive heart,
 But shall not blast my virtue and my fame.
 No: thy reproaches are unjust, my friend
 Was too severe; condemn me not unjustly,
 Love ne'er unnerves the gallant sons of France:
 Ev'n from the bosom of success and joy,
 Fearless they fly to arms, and rush on death:
 And I too will die worthy of Amelia.

LISOIS.

Say rather, worthy of thyself: I think
 To day of nothing but the public welfare;
 I talk of battles, and thou speak'st of love.
 My lord, I've seen the army of the foe:
 Vamir, so fame reports, is arm'd against us:
 From us, I know, he hath long since withdrawn.
 His valiant troops, I know him not, but hear
 He's of a noble nature: if his soul,
 Inspir'd by duty, and by glory warm'd,
 Still feels the tender tie that link'd your hearts
 In earlier years, he may assist us now,
 And be the means of making wish'd-for peace.
 My cares — — —

DUKE.

Away: I wou'd not be oblig'd
 Thus to a brother: shall I sue for peace,

And

And ask forgiveness? yet it hurts my soul
To think that Vamir is my foe : I still
Remember our past friendship, and the love
I bore him once ; but since he will oppose me,
Since he's no longer ours, why let him go,
And serve his king.

L I S O I S.

Thy fiery temper braves
Too far the patience of an easy monarch.

D U K E.

A monarch ! the mere phantom of a king,
Unworthy of his race, a royal slave,
In golden chains, and seated on a throne
Subjected to a petty officer :
I'm not afraid of Pepin their arch-tyrant ;
I hate a subject that wou'd frighten me,
And I despise a king who can't command :
If he permits a rebel to usurp
The sov'reign pow'r, I'll still support my own :
This heart's too proud to bend beneath the laws
Of these new upstarts who oppress their king :
Clovis, my royal ancestor, ne'er taught
His sons to cringe beneath a haughty master,
At least these faithful Arabs will revenge me ;
If I must feel a tyrant, let him be
A stranger.

L I S O I S.

THE DUKE OF FOIX.

231

LISOIS.

You detest these* governors,
But they have sav'd our empire, which your friends,
The Arabs, but for them had overthrown :
I tremble at this new alliance : Spain
Before you stands a terrible example :
These savage plund'ers, these new tyrants dig
Our graves with our own hands. 'Twere better far
To yield with prudence.

DUKE.

What, fall down and sue
For mercy !

LISOIS.

Your true int'rest long forgotten — —

DUKE.

Revenge is my first int'rest.

LISOIS.

Love and anger
Too long have rul'd the bosom of my friend.

DUKE.

I know they have, but cannot conquer nature.

* The original is 'vous haïssez un Maire ;' literally translated you hate a *Mayor*. *Maire* may perhaps sound very well in a *French* ear, but in *English* it is rather unpoetical, and so far beneath the dignity of the *Bulkin*, that I am not certain whether the single word *Mayor*, repeated two or three times, wou'd not throw an air of ridicule over a whole scene, and perhaps contribute in a great measure to damn a modern tragedy.

LISOIS.

L I S O I S.

You may, you ought ; nay, I'll not flatter you,
 But ev'n, tho' I condemn, I'll follow thee ;
 'Tis a friend's duty to point out the faults
 Of him he loves ; to counsel, to exhort,
 To save him from the dang'rous precipice :
 This I have done for thee, but thou wilt fall,
 And I must perish with thee.

D U K E.

O my friend,

What hast thou said ?

L I S O I S.

But what I ought to say :

And wou'd to heav'n that thou had'st listen'd to me !
 What dost thou purpose ?

D U K E.

When my ardent hopes

Shall be fulfill'd, when the ungrateful maid
 Shall give sweet peace to my distracted mind,
 Then will I hear the counsels of my friend.
 What can I purpose now, or what design,
 Till I have seen the tyrant who must guide
 My future fate ? let her determine for me,
 Let her save me, and I will save my country.

E N D of the F I R S T A C T.

A C T

ACT II. SCENE I.

The DUKE of FOIX alone.

She cannot sure again refuse to see me,
And urge me to despair ! she dare not do it :
Fool that I am to give her thus the pow'r,
How weak is my proud heart to yield itself
A voluntary slave ! go, throw thyself,
Mean as thou art, beneath the tyrant's feet ;
Go, make thy life dependant on a word,
A look, a smile, from proud Amelia ; pass
From love to fury, and from tears to rage ;
'Tis the last time I e'er will speak to her.
I go ———

SCENE II.

The DUKE, AMELIA, and THAIS, who advance
from the upper end of the stage.

AMELIA.

There's hope, my Thais ; yet I tremble.
Wou'd Vamir hazard this bold enterprise ?
'Tis full of danger ; ha ! what do I see ?

[advancing towards the Duke.

DUKE.

Amelia, what hath this way led thy steps
I know not, but thy eyes too plainly tell me

That

That I was not the object of their search :
 What ! still turn from me, still insult the heart
 That dotes upon thee ! cruel tyrant, thus
 To blast the laurels planted on my brow :
 O if Amelia's hand had plac'd them there
 They might have flourish'd, but she has forgot
 Her plighted faith, and broke her flatt'ring promise.

A M E L I A.

Thou never hadst my faith, I never gave
 My promise, gratitude is all I owe thee.

D U K E.

Did I not offer thee my hand ?

A M E L I A.

Thou didst :

It was an honour which I cou'd not merit,
 And which I never sought, but I receiv'd it
 With due respect ; you thought, no doubt, a rank
 So glorious must have dazzled poor Amelia.
 At length, my lord, 'tis time to undeceive you ;
 I do it with regret, because I know
 It will offend you, but I must be plain :
 In short, my lord, I love my king too well
 To think of wedding with his foe : thy blood

I know

I know, is noble ; mine is spotless yet,
Nor will be stain'd with foul disloyalty,
And I inherit from my ancestors
The fix'd abhorrence of my country's foes :
Nor will I e'er acknowledge for a master
The friend of tyrants, be he e'er so great :
Such is my firm resolve ; perhaps, my lord,
It may seem harsh, but you oblig'd me to it.

DUKE.

This is a language, madam, which I own
I look'd not for ; I never cou'd have thought
That angry heav'n, to make me doubly wretched,
Wou'd choose Amelia for its instrument
Of vengeance : you have study'd long in secret
The arts of black ingratitude, of scorn
And insult, and now open all your heart.
I was a stranger to this patriot zeal,
This most heroic ardor for thy country,
This fetch of policy ; but tell me, madam,
Whom have you here but this insulted lover,
The injur'd Foix, to succour and support you ?
Thou hast reproach'd me with my new alliance,
Those faithful friends on whom I here rely
For all my safety, and for all my pow'r ;
Without their aid thou had'st been still a captive ;

To

To them you ow'd your liberty and life,
And am I thus rewarded?

A M E L I A.

You prolong'd

My wretched days ; but are they therefore yours,
And may I not dispose them as I please ?
Did you preserve me but to make me wretched,
To be a tyrant o'er the life you sav'd ?

D U K E.

Ungrateful woman, thou deserv'st the name
Of tyrant most, for now I read thy soul,
See thro' the thin disguise, behold too plainly
My own dishonour, and thy treach'rous falsehood :
I know thou lov'st another, but whoe'er
He be that thus hath robb'd me of thy heart,
Fear thou my love, and tremble at my rage ;
For, if he be on earth, I'll find the traitor,
And tear him from thee : if amidst its horrors
My soul cou'd feel one momentary joy,
'Twou'd be to make thee wretched.

A M E L I A.

No : my lord,
Indeed it wou'd not ; reason will forbid it :
Thy soul's too noble to oppress with woe
A life which thou had'st sav'd ; but if thy heart

Shou'd

Shou'd ever stoop so low, thy virtues still,
Thy goodness in my memory shall live,
And only thy unkindness be forgotten.
I pity, and forgive thee; thou wilt blush
Hereafter at the thought of inj'ring me;
Spite of thy threats, my soul is yet unmov'd,
Nor dreads thy anger, nor defies thy pow'r.

DUKE.

Forgive the transports of a mind disturb'd,
The rage of love embitter'd by despair;
Lisoi, I find, holds secret conf'rence with you,
Abetts your falsehood, and defends your conduct;
Leans to the royal party, and combines
In vain with you to make a convert of me:
It seems I'm to be govern'd by your will,
And not my own: your converse is the same,
The same your purpose; but why use these arms
Against me? to persuade my easy heart,
Why must Amelia seek a stranger's aid?
A word will win me, if 'tis spoke by love.

AMELIA.

My heart, I own, hath open'd to thy friend
Its hopes and fears, but he hath done much more
Than he had promis'd: pity then my tears,
Pity my sorrows, be thyself again;

Subdue

Subdue a passion which Amelia must not,
 Cannot return: accept my gratitude,
 'Tis all I have to give thee.

D U K E.

Lisais then,
 And he alone, enjoys thy confidence,
 Thy friendship, more perhaps; I see it now.

A M E L I A.

You may perhaps hereafter, but at present
 You have no right, sir, to controul my thoughts,
 My actions, or my words; no right to blame me,
 Or to complain: I sought thy friend's assistance,
 And he has giv'n it me; I wish, my lord,
 That you wou'd learn to act and think like him.

S C E N E III.

The Duke alone.

'Tis well: this base ungrateful perjur'd woman,
 Without a blush, confesses all her falsehood;
 The myst'ry is unfolded now: one friend,
 One only friend, I had, and he destroys me.
 Friendship! vain phantom, unsubstantial shade,
 So often sought for, and so seldom found,
 Thou ever hadst some wholesome draught to pour
 Into my cup of sorrow: but at last

Thou

Thou too, like love, hast cruelly deceiv'd me !
For the reward of all my errors past
I have but this, that no allurements now,
No flatt'ring pleasures, henceforth shall betray me;
For from this hour I will be fond—of nothing.
But lo the traitor comes with cruel hand
To tear my wounds, and make them bleed afresh.

SCENE IV.

LISOIS.

My lord, I come obedient to your orders :
But why that frown, those eyes of discontent
That scowl upon me ? has thy soul, long time
The sport of passion, weigh'd in reason's scale
Thy int'rest, and thy happiness ?

DUKE.

It has.

LISOIS.

And what was the result ?

DUKE.

My eyes are open'd
To falsehood and deceit ; I've learn'd to find
A rival and a traitor in my friend.

LISOIS.

How's that !

DUKE.

It is enough.

LISOIS.

L I S O I S.

Too much, my lord:

Who is the traitor?

D U K E.

Can'st thou ask me who?

Who but thyself was privy to the wrongs
 I have receiv'd, who else must answer for them?
 I know, Amelia hath convers'd with thee
 Here, in the palace; when I mention'd thee
 She trembled: this affected silence speaks
 Your guilt more plainly, and I know not which
 Most to abhor, Amelia, or — — my friend.

L I S O I S.

Can'st thou yet listen to that friend?

D U K E.

I can.

L I S O I S.

Think'st thou I still am anxious for my fame?
 Dost thou esteem, and can'st thou yet believe me?

D U K E.

I will: for till this hour I thought thee virtuous,
 And held thee for my friend.

L I S O I S.

Those noble titles
 Have hitherto conducted me thro' life;

But

But wherefore justify myself to thee ?
Thou'lt not deserv'd it : know, Amelia's charms
Long since had touch'd my heart, before thy hand
Had set her free, and sav'd her precious life,
But by the ties of gratitude she's thine :
Thou hast deserv'd her by thy services :
For me, I'm more the soldier than the soft
And tender lover ; I despise the art
Of base seduction, fit for courts alone,
And flatt'ry's smooth perfidiousness ; my soul
Is made of firmer stuff : I talk'd indeed
Of marriage to her ; and that sacred tie,
Knit by esteem and fair equality
Of fortune and condition, might have made her
More happy far than rank and titles cou'd,
That stand upon a dang'rous precipice :
But yesternight, you know, I visited
Your ramparts, when your jealous soul alarm'd
Discover'd all its passion : I observ'd it :
To day I saw the object of your grief,
Your lov'd Amelia, and beheld her charms
With eyes of cold indiff'rence : o'er myself
I gain'd an easy conquest : I did more,
Pleaded for thee, for an ungrateful friend,
And urg'd a passion which I can't approve ;

Recall'd

Recall'd the mem'ry of thy bounties past,
 Thy glory and thy rank, acknowledg'd faults
 I knew you had, and number'd all your virtues;
 All this against myself I did for thee;
 For my friend's happiness gave up my own:
 And if the sacrifice is still imperfect,
 Shew me the rival that still dares t'oppose thee,
 And I will stake my life to do thee justice.

D U K E.

My friend, thou soar'st above me; I am fall'n,
 Abash'd, confounded: who cou'd see Amelia
 And not adore her? but to conquer thus
 Thy passion! O, thou never cou'dst have lov'd her.

L I S O I S.

I did: but love, like other passions, acts
 With diff'rent force on diff'rent minds.

D U K E.

I love

Too well, my friend, and cannot imitate
 The virtue I admire: my foolish heart——

L I S O I S.

I ask not for thy praises, but thy love;
 And if thou think'st that I have merited
 Aught at thy hands, O do but serve thyself,

Thy

Thy happiness is Lisois' best reward.

Thou seest with what determin'd hate thy brother

Pursues the Moor, I dread the consequence :

The people groan beneath this foreign yoke,

Soon, I foresee, the empire will unite

Their scatter'd pow'rs, new enemies still rise

Against us, the pure blood of Clovis still

Is worshipp'd by the croud, and soon or late

The branches of this sacred tree, that long

Have been beneath the storm, again shall rise,

Spring with fresh verdure, and o'ershade the land.

Plac'd by thy rank and fortunes near the throne,

Long time thou wert thy king and country's friend ;

But in the days of publick discord, fate

Attach'd thee to another cause ; perhaps

New int'rests now may call for new connections,

And what united may dissolve the tye ;

The pow'r of these despotic governors

May be restrain'd, and weaken'd by thy hand——

DUKE.

I wish it were so : think'st thou then Amelia

Wou'd listen to me ? if I shou'd embrace

The royal party, might she still be mine ?

LISOIS.

I am a stranger to Amelia's heart :

VOL. II.

M

But

But what are her designs, her views to thee?
Must love alone decide the nation's fate?
In Touraine's field, when gallant Clovis fought,
And, o'er the haughty conquerors of Rome
Victorious, stopp'd the bloody Arian's hand,
That dealt destruction round us, did he save
His country, think'st thou, but to please a mistress?
This arm against a rival is prepar'd
To serve my friend, but I wou'd serve him more,
Wou'd cure him of this fond destructive passion;
This love deceives us, we're too fearful of him;
We wound ourselves, and lay the blame on him;
The coward's tyrant, and the hero's slave;
He may be conquer'd; Lisois has subdu'd him,
And shall he triumph o'er the blood of kings
Who never yet submitted to a foe?
Awake, my friend, and be our great example
In ev'ry virtue!

D U K E.

Yes, I will do all,
All for Amelia: she must yield at last.
Her laws, her king, her master, shall be mine:
I have no will but her, and in her eyes
Will read my duty, and my fate: possess'd
Of the dear treasure, will be reconcil'd

To

To ev'ry foe. O how my heart enjoys
The pleasing hope ! I had no cause to fear,
I have no rival : if thou art not lov'd,
I can have none : who in this court wou'd dare
To cast one look towards Amelia ? now
Her vain pretexts are vanish'd : reason, glory,
My int'rest, and my birth, the sacred right
Of my great ancestors, all all unite
To bind the nuptial chain, and make me happy.
Henceforth I am the king's, and will support him ;
So virtue bids, and beauty has commanded.
On this blest day will I confirm the oaths
I made to love : away, my friend, I leave
My int'rest and my fortunes to thy care.

L I S O I S.

Permit me then, my lord, to seek the king :
I cou'd have wish'd that this important change
Were to the hero not the lover due ;
But be it as it may, th'effect's too glorious
To blame the cause : I triumph in thy weakness,
And blest for once the lucky pow'r of love.

M 2

S C E N E.

S C E N E V.

The DUKE, LISOIS, an OFFICER.
OFFICER.

My Lord, the foe advances ; we expect
A fierce assault, and wait your orders ; time
Is precious.

DUKE.

Cruel fate ! to counteract
My noble purpose ! then farewell to peace,
And welcome vict'ry ? I'll deserve Amelia :
I heed not these rash fools : of all the foes
I have to conquer, there's but one to fear,
And that's—Amelia.

END of the SECOND ACT.

A C T III. S C E N E I.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS.

DUKE.

THE day is ours ; thanks to thy friendly hand
That guided my rash youth ; thy noble soul,
In peace or war, is my best counsellor.

LISOIS.

LISOIS.

The glorious fire that animates thy heart
Must always conquer, when 'tis check'd by prudence,
As here it was: preserve this happy virtue,
'Twill make thee happy, and 'twill make thee great;
The coward's restless, but the hero, calm.

DUKE.

How is the lover? can he ever taste
Of sweet tranquility? but say, my friend,
This unknown chief, that mounted on our ramparts,
And with his single arm so long suspended
The doubtful vict'ry: I grew jealous of him:
Where is he? what became of him?

LISOIS.

Surrounded

By slaughter'd friends, alone long time he stood,
And brav'd opposing legions; but what most
Surpris'd us, when at length he had escap'd
From ev'ry danger, wond'rous to relate!
He yielded up himself a pris'oner to us;
Conceals his rank and name, accuses heav'n,
And begs for instant death. One friend alone
Attends him, and partakes his sorrows.

M 3

DUKE

Lisais,

Who can this bold this fearless soldier be ?
 He wore his beaver down : some secret charm
 O'erpower'd my trembling soul when I oppos'd him.
 Whether this fatal passion that enslaves me
 Hath spread its weakness o'er each faculty,
 And left the soft impression on my soul,
 Or that my bleeding country's voice alarm'd
 This conscious heart, and silently reproach'd me.

L I S A I S.

As for the weakness of thy soul, advice
 I know were vain, but sure thy country's voice
 May still be heard ; now is the time to shew
 The greatness of thy soul, and give us peace.
 Fortune, that smil'd on us to-day, perhaps
 May frown to-morrow, and thy pride be forc'd
 To sue for pardon to a haughty foe.
 Since thou art happy, and Amelia's thine,
 Now rest thy glory on the common cause,
 This brave unknown may forward our designs ;
 Let us improve the lucky moment.

D U K E.

Yes,

My friend, I will do all to serve Amelia,

Her

Her cause is mine : I must prepare the minds
 Of my brave followers for the change ; to thee,
 And to thy happy counsels, ev'ry bliss,
 Glory and peace, and hymenial joys,
 To thee I owe, to friendship and to love.

SCENE II.

LISOIS, VAMIR, and EMAR at the further end of
 the stage.

LISOIS.

It is the noble pris'ner, and his friend,
 If I mistake not : this way they advance ;
 He seems o'erwhelm'd with deep despair,

VAMIR.

O heav'n !

Where am I ? whether dost thou lead me ?

LISOIS.

Stranger,

Whoe'er thou art, be comforted ; thy fate
 Hath thrown thee into noble hands : thou'lt find
 A gen'rous master, who can see desert
 Ev'n in a foe : may I not ask thy name ?

VAMIR.

I am a poor abandon'd wretch, the sport
 Of fortune, one whose least affliction is

M 4

To .

To be a captive, and from ev'ry eye
 Wou'd wish to hide the story of my fate:
 It is enough to be supremely wretched,
 Without this cruel witness of my woe:
 Too soon my name and sorrows will be known.

L I S O I S.

Respect is due to misery like thine ;
 I will not urge thee further, but retire :
 Perhaps ev'n here thy soul may find relief
 In gen'rous treatment, and a milder fate.

S C E N E III.

V A M I R, E M A R.

V A M I R.

A milder fate ! I must not hope for it :
 O I have liv'd too long.

E M A R.

Thank heav'n, my lord,
 That we are fall'n amongst such noble foes,
 And shall not groan beneath a stranger's pow'r.

V A M I R,

No yoke sometimes so galling as a brother's

E M A R.

But you were bred together, and the ties
 Of tend'rest friendship link'd your hearts.

V A M I R.

VAMIR.

They did :

But O ! the friendship of our early years
 Soon takes its flight : he lov'd me once, and still
 'This heart retains a brother's kindness for him :
 I cannot hate him, tho' he conquer'd me.

EMAR.

He knows not yet how great a captive comes
 To grace his triumph ; knows not that a brother
 Is in his pow'r, whom vengeance had inspir'd. —

VAMIR.

No : Emar, never did a thought of vengeance
 Enter my heart ; a diff'rent passion sway'd
 The soul of Vamir : can it be, just heav'n !
 Or is it but the lying voice of fame,
 That my Amelia's false, that she has broke
 Her solemn vows ? for whom too ? added guilt
 To her, and double sorrow to thy friend !
 The sacred laws of nature, and the ties
 Of tender love, all broken, all betray'd !
 Unjust, inhuman brother !

EMAR.

Knows he then

How dear a treasure he hath robb'd thee of

M 5 .

In

In thy Amelia? did not Vamir say
That he was still a stranger to thy love?

V A M I R.

But she is not: she knows what solemn ties,
What strict engagements, bound us to each other:
That at the altar, e'er we had confirm'd
Our mutual vows, the barb'rous Moor rush'd in,
And tore her from me; the base ravishers
Escap'd my vengeance, and my happier brother
Enjoys the precious treasure Vamir lost.
Ungrateful woman! came I here, my friend,
But to reproach her? what will it avail?
She will not listen to my fond complaint:
But to my royal master I have liv'd
A faithful servant, and to false Amelia,
And faithful will I die: when she shall know
How well I lov'd her, she may shed a tear,
And in a brother's arms lament my fate.

E M A R,

Reprefs thy sorrows; see, the Duke approaches.

V A M I R,

Be still, my heart.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

DUKE of FOIX, VAMIR, EMAR.

DUKE.

This mystery alarms me :
But I must see this noble captive : ha !
He turns aside with horror.

VAMIR.

Hateful life !
Must I support thee still ? must I again
Behold the faithless wretch ?

DUKE.

What do I hear ?

VAMIR,

Dost thou not know me ?

DUKE.

Ha ! my brother ! Vamir !

VAMIR.

Alas ! too sure I am that wretched brother,
Thy vanquish'd foe, a poor abandon'd captive.

DUKE.

Thou art my brother still, and I forgive thee ;
But 'tis most strange, and most unnatural :
Cou'd the king find no instrument but thee

To

To execute his vengeance on my head?
What had I done to Vamir?

V A M I R.

Made his life
Unhappy: wou'd that thou had'st ta'en it from me!

D U K E.

Dreadful effects of civil strife!

V A M I R.

More dreadful
Are the deep wounds that pierce the heart of Vamir.

D U K E.

Against another foe I might have shewn
A soldier's courage, but I pity thee.

V A M I R.

Pity thyself, the wretch who has betray'd
His country, and deceiv'd the king that lov'd him;
A traitor, and unworthy of thy race.

D U K E.

Brand me not, Vamir, with th' opprobrious name
Of traitor, least I shou'd forget myself,
And spurn thee for the insult: no, my brother,
I'm not that base ungrateful wretch thou think'st me;
Thou see'st me ready to restore fair peace,
And heal the wounds of my divided country.

V A M I R.

VAMIR.

Thou heal our wounds ! thou —

DUKE.

Yes : the day that seem'd
So fatal to thy peace shall quench the flames
Of public discord, and unite us all.

VAMIR.

O 'tis a day of sorrow.

DUKE.

Of delight
And joy, the day that crowns my wishes —

VAMIR.

How !

DUKE.

Yes, Vamir, all is chang'd, and I am happy.

VAMIR.

It may be so : I heard indeed thy heart
These three months past has been the slave of love ;
And if report says true, most violent
And fierce thy passion.

DUKE.

Thou hast heard aright ;
I love her ev'n to madness : thou art come
In happy hour to make our bliss complete.
Yes : I will lay my friends, my foes, my ev'ry claim,
Revenge and glory, all beneath her feet.

Go,

Go, tell her two unhappy brothers, long

[To his attendants.

By adverse fate to diff'rent int'rests bound,

Wait but a look from her to be united.

[To Vamir,

Blame not my passion, Vamir, when thou see'st

The lovely object, soon wilt thou approve it.

VAMIR.

[Aside.

And does she love thee? cruel thought!

DUKE.

At least

She ought: one obstacle alone remain'd,

And that shall be remov'd,

VAMIR.

[Aside.

Inhuman brother!

Know'st thou what led me to this fatal place,

And mean'st thou to insult me?

DUKE.

Let us bury

In deep oblivion ev'ry thought of discord;

Behold, the fair Amelia comes.

SCENE

SCENE V.

DURE of FOIX, VAMIR, AMELIA.

AMELIA.

O heav'n!

What do I see? I die.

DUKE.

Amelia, listen,

And mark how happiness ariseth oft

From our misfortunes; this day I have conquer'd,

And this day found a brother; thou, my Vamir,

Shalt be a witness to the pow'r of love.

What nor Amelia's pray'rs, nor her reproaches,

My gen'rous friend, my country, and my king,

Long time in vain solicited, her charms

At length have won: to them I yield submissive.

Amelia, whilst I was thy sov'reign's foe,

Thou wou'd'st not listen to my vows: henceforth

I have no laws, no friends, no king, but thine:

So love commands, and love shall be obey'd.

Vamir, thou'rt free: be thou the messenger

Of welcome tidings to the court: away,

And tell the king I hasten to present

His fair ally, the conqueror who subdued

A rebel's heart, and of a dang'rous foe

Hath

Hath made a faithful subject ; chang'd by her,
And her alone.

V A M I R.

[Aside.

'Tis as I wish'd : my fate

Will soon be known : speak, and pronounce our doom.

D U K E.

Amelia, speak, art thou not satisfy'd
With my submission ? Is it not enough
To see a conqueror thus humbly kneel
Before thee ? Can my life alone content
Thy cruel heart ? take it, ungrateful woman !
I wish'd but to preserve it for thy sake ;
For thee alone I liv'd, for thee will die.

A M E L I A.

I am astonish'd, and my fault'ring voice
Will scarce give utterance to my words : — my lord,
If thy great soul laments thy country's fate,
And feels for her distress, thy gen'rous care
Must spring from nobler motives than the wish
To serve Amelia ; thou hast heard the voice
Of pow'rful nature ; what hath love to do
Where only honour hath a right to dictate ?

D U K E.

'Tis thy own work, Amelia, all thy own :
O'er ev'ry int'rest, ev'ry passion, love
Superior reigns ; reproach me, cover me

With

With shame, no matter : I must force thy heart ;
Come, to the altar.

VAMIR.

Dar'ft thou ———

AMELIA.

No, my lord ;

I'd sooner die : my life's at thy command,
But not my heart : there is a fatal bar
Between us, and I never can be thine.

DUKE.

'Tis well, ungrateful — dost thou hear her, Vamir ?
But I'll be calm : I'll not complain of thee,
I see thee now : the soft persuasive arts
That call our passions forth, the flatt'ring hope
That's giv'n but to betray, the subtle poison
Spred o'er our hearts, deceitful all and vain,
No longer shall seduce my easy faith,
The eye of reason hath detected them,
And the same art that bound hath set me free :
I will not blush before thee, Vamir : no,
I will not be despis'd : but let me see
This hidden rival, bring him here before me,
And I will yield him up the worthless prize ;
For know, I have contempt enough for both
To wish you were united ; that alone
Shou'd be your punishment.

AMELIA.

A M E L I A.

Perhaps, my lord,

'Twere fittest for Amelia to retire
 In silence, but I hold my honour dear,
 And must defend it : I have been accus'd
 Before your brother, and must answer thee.
 Know then, I'm destin'd to another's arms ;
 I own my love, my tender passion for him ;
 Amelia were unworthy of his heart,
 Had she e'er giv'n a distant hope to thee :
 But you wou'd seize my faith and liberty,
 As if they were by right of conquest thine.
 I ow'd thee much, but injuries like these,
 My lord, discharge the debt of gratitude,
 And cancel all : I saw, and pity'd long
 The violence of thy fruitless passion for me ;
 Do not then make me hate thee : I rejected
 Thy proffer'd vows, but never scorn'd thy love :
 I wish'd for thy esteem, and gave thee mine.

D U K E.

Perfidious woman ! nought hast thou deserv'd
 But my resentment, which thou soon shalt know
 Is equal to my love : you waited then
 For Vamir to be witness of my shame !

I shou'd

I shou'd have thought he was himself the traitor,
If — but he ne'er beheld thy fatal charms,
My happier brother never knew Amelia.
Who is this rival? let me know his name,
But think not I will tamely yield to him.
No: I deceiv'd thee there, but cannot long
Dissemble; I will drag thee to the altar,
There, as he dies in torment, shall he see
Our hands united; I will dip in blood
The torch of Hymen: well I know that princes
Have been despis'd for mean and vulgar slaves,
But I shall find him.

VAMIR.

Why shoud'st thou suppose
This rival so contemptible?

DUKE.

And why
Shoud'st thou excuse him? Did'st thou never know
her?

'Tis dreadful to conceive it. If thou did'st,
Now, traitor, tremble.

VAMIR.

Vamir tremble? No:
Too long already I have born in silence
Thy cruel insults; know me now, barbarian,

Know

Know a despair that's equal to thy own :
Strike here ; behold thy brother, and thy rival.

DUKE.

Thou, Vamir, thou ?

VAMIR.

Yes : for these two years past

We've been united in the strictest bonds
Of tender love ; the only good on earth
I wish'd to keep, thy cruel hand hath strove
To ravish from me, made my life unhappy :
Judge of my mis'ries by thy own : we both
Are jealous, both were born the slaves of passion :
Hatred and love, resentment, and despair,
Possess our souls, and all in the extreme :
Thou wert my rival, therefore I oppos'd thee :
Furious, and blind, I ran, I flew to save
The object of my love ; not all thy pow'r
Restrain'd me, nor my weakness, time nor place,
Not ev'n thy noble courage ; love prevail'd
O'er friendship, and the ties of blood : be thou
Cruel like me, like me unnatural,
Whilst I have life, thou never can'st enjoy
Thy conquest, never can'st possess Amelia :
Strike then and punish, shed thy brother's blood ;

But

But when thou dragg'st her with thee to the altar,
Remember, she's thy sister, and my wife.

DUKE.

Guards, seize the traitor, take him from my sight.

AMELIA,

Stay, cruel prince; art thou inflexible,
Deaf to the voice of nature; O, my lord!

VAMIR.

Sue not for me, Amelia, Vamir's fate
Is to be envy'd: he most claims your pity
Who hath betray'd his king, and injur'd thee:
I am reveng'd, the victory is mine;
For thou art hated here, and I'm belov'd.

AMELIA. [kneeling to the Duke.

O dearest prince, my lord, see at your feet———

DUKE.

Away with him: rise, madam, for your tears
And fruitless pray'rs to save a traitor's life,
But pour fresh poison o'er my wounded heart
That bleeds for thee; but I will die, Amelia,
Not unreveng'd: when thou shalt feel my rage,
Accuse thyself; the work is all thy own.

AMELIA.

A M E L I A.

I cannot leave thee: O, my lord, yet hear — —

D U K E.

If I must hear thee, speak, go on.

S C E N E VI.

The D U K E, V A M I R, A M E L I A, L I S O I S.
L I S O I S.

My lord,

The people are in arms; at Vamir's name
They rose tumultuous, and on ev'ry side
Disorder reigns; th'affrighted soldiers leave
Their colours, and in wild confusion fly:
Mean time the foe unites his scatter'd pow'rs,
And rushes on us.

D U K E.

Go, ungrateful woman!

Thou hast not long to glory in thy crimes;
Follow her---

[To one of her attendants,

I must to the factious croud
And shew myself: thou, Lisois, guard this traitor.

S C E N E VII.

L I S O I S.

Art thou a traitor? could'st thou thus disgrace
Thy noble blood, to violate the laws

Of

Of nature? cou'd a prince so far forget
His duty and himself?

VAMIR.

I never did :

The people's just : my brother is a rebel,
And has betray'd his master.

LISOIS.

Hear me, Vamir :

My soul desires no greater happiness
Than to unite you : long have I beheld
With deep regret my bleeding country's woes,
Our fields laid waste, and nature sacrific'd
To discord and revenge ; the haughty Moor,
Rais'd on our ruins, menacing the state,
Which we have weaken'd by our own divisions.
O, if thou bear'st a heart that's truly noble,
And worthy of thy race, now save thy country ;
Exert thy pow'r to reconcile the king,
Soften thy brother, and put out the flames
Of civil war.

VAMIR.

Impossible ! thy cares
Are fruitless all and vain : if nought but discord,
Revenge and hatred, led me to the field,
Had glory and ambition fir'd my breast,

Thou

Thou might'st have hoped indeed to re-unite us ;
But there's a bar more fatal still behind.

L I S O I S.

What cou'd it be ! O tell me, Vamir.

V A M I R.

Love :

Love that has fill'd this breast with savage fury,
And made my brother cruel and inhuman.

L I S O I S.

Good heav'n ! that vain caprice shou'd thus destroy
The noblest purposes ! Almighty love,
Can'st thou reverse the laws of nature, fill
With unrelenting hate the jealous hearts
Of fondest brothers, and in ev'ry clime
By private passions work the public ruin ?
Vamir, I feel for both, but long have serv'd
Thy brother ; I must hence, and second him
Against thy factious friends : the strife is dreadful,
And much I fear will have a bloody end ;
But I must fly to succour him : farewell ;
Thou art my pris'ner, but I leave thee here ;
Give me thy word, that shall suffice.

V A M I R.

I do.

L I S O I S.

LISOIS.

Wou'd I cou'd knit you in the bonds of peace!
But much more to be fear'd than all thy foes,
And far more fatal, is the tyrant, love,

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

VAMIR, AMELIA, EMAR.

AMELIA.

O Vamir, how the hand of heav'n hath mark'd
My life with sad variety of woe!
The chance of war, that tore me from thy arms,
Once more hath join'd us; but, alas! we meet
On mournful terms, meet but to part; my Vamir,
Did'st thou not say it must be so?

VAMIR.

It must:

Thou see'st me chain'd by honour's laws beneath
A rival's pow'r: my sacred word is giv'n:
Vamir may die, but must not follow thee.

AMELIA.

Thou who hast dar'd to fight, art thou afraid
To flee from him?

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N

VAMIR.

V A M I R.

I am: my honour binds me:

Take thou advantage of the gen'ral tumult,
Which favors thy retreat: a guard attends
To aid thy flight; heav'n will protect thy virtues;
Hope for the best.

A M E L I A.

What can Amelia hope;
When thou art from her?

V A M I R.

'Tis but for a day.

A M E L I A.

O but that day will be an age to me.
Grant, heav'n! my tears and terrors may be vain.
The Moor, I know, thirsts for Vamir's blood;
Think'st thou thy brother will not give it him?
He loves with fury, and he hates with rancour;
His hatred, like his love, is in extreme:
He is thy rival, and the Moor's ally.
I tremble for thee.

V A M I R.

He wou'd never dare———

A M E L I A.

O his impetuous passion knows no bounds.

V A M I R.

VAMIR.

He must be taught to know them soon; the king
Comes to revenge us: half his force already
Throngs to the royal standard; if thou lov'st me,
Fly, my Amelia, from th'impending storm,
From dreadful slaughter, and the din of arms,
And all the terrors of a bloody field;
But, above all, avoid my furious rival,
Whose jealous love despis'd, will turn to rage;
Avoid an insult Vamir must revenge,
Or perish in th' attempt: my dear Amelia,
Hope of my life, the only good on earth
I have to boast, do not expose thyself
To needless dangers, but retire in safety.

AMELIA.

Why wilt thou hazard then thy precious life,
And stay without Amelia?

VAMIR.

When thou'rt safe,
I shall not fear my brother; soon perhaps
Vamir may prove his best support: to-day
I am his pris'ner, but perchance to-morrow
May be his patron, and persuade the king
To spare a rebel: to protect my rival

Were noble triumph. Haste, Amelia, leave
This seat of danger.

A M E L I A.

Wheresoever fate
Shall cast my hapless lot, I'll carry with me
My hatred and my love ; 'mid'st ev'ry danger,
In the wild desert, or the gloomy dungeon,
In exile, or in chains, in death itself,
Still shall I think on, still adore my Vamir :
But O ! I cannot bear to live without thee.

V A M I R.

It is too much : thy griefs unman my soul.
What noise was that ? O thou hast staid too long.

S C E N E II.

A M E L I A, V A M I R, DUKE of FOIX, Guards.

D U K E.

I hear his voice ; 'tis he : stay, villain, thou
Who hast betray'd me.

V A M I R.

I betray'd thee not.
Now satiate thy revenge, and take my life ;
Lose not a moment, for the hand of heav'n
Is rais'd against thee : tremble, slave, thy king
Approaches : thou hast conquer'd none but Vamir :
Thy master comes, take heed.

D U K E.

DUKE.

He may revenge,
But cannot save thee; for thy blood—

AMELIA.

O no,

Amelia's guilty: let Amelia die,
And not my Vamir: I deceiv'd thy guards,
And barter'd with them to assist my flight
From hatred slav'ry, and a tyrant's pow'r:
Punish my crimes, but O respect a brother,
Respect thyself, thy own unblemish'd fame:
He ne'er betray'd, but loves and wou'd have serv'd thee,
Ev'n when thy rage had doom'd him to destruction.
What crime has he committed? none, my lord,
None but the crime of loving his Amelia.

DUKE.

The more thou plead'st for him, the more his guilt:
Thou art his murth'rer: thou, whose fatal charms
Have poison'd all our happiness, and arm'd
Our hands against each other, may the blood
Of both fall on thee! now thou weep'st, thy tears
No longer shall deceive me: I must die,
But Vamir first shall perish. Yet I love thee,
Ev'n yet thou may'st escape the fatal blow:

N 3

Accept:

Accept my hand, attend me to the altar,
And seal his pardon there.

A M E L I A.

Who, I, my lord?

D U K E.

It is enough.

A M E L I A.

Shall I be false to Vamir?

D U K E.

Stop—Answer me.

A M E L I A.

I cannot.

D U K E.

Let him die.

V A M I R.

Amelia, never let his threats overcome
Thy noble faith, but love me well enough
To see me perish: leave me to my fate;
Now I shall fall triumphant: should'st thou yeild,
Vamir must die by his Amelia's hand.

D U K E.

Guards, drag the traitor to the tow'r: away.

S C E N E III.

D U K E, A M E L I A.

A M E L I A,

And wilt thou make this horrid sacrifice?
Pollute thee with the blood of innocence;
Thou wilt not?

D U K E.

DUKE.

Yes : to hate thee, and to die,
 Is all I wish ; to see thee more unhappy,
 More wretched than myself, to shed the blood
 That's dearest to thee, and to make thy days
 As full of woe, as was that fatal hour
 Which hath destroy'd us all. Away, and leave me ;
 The sight of thee distracts me.

SCENE IV.

DUKE, AMELIA, LISSOIS.

From thy justice,
 And, that alone, I can expect relief.
 Help me to soften this obdurate heart :
 Assist me, Lissois.

DUKE.

If thou listen'st to her,
 Thou'rt not my friend.

AMELIA.

I call just heav'n to witness.

DUKE.

Hence from my sight : I loath thee.

AMELIA.

Tyrant, go,

For I abhor thee ; spite of all thy rage,
 I thought a woman might at least command
 Some cold respect : but love, that softens all,

N 4

Hath

Hath lost its tender influence o'er thy heart :
 I leave thee to thy rage ; go, sacrifice
 Thy victims, 'midst thy crimes be sure thou count
 Amelia's death, and with it count thy own,
 For vengeance comes, and in thy punishment
 Unites us all ; inglorious shalt thou perish,
 And unlamented. Die, inhuman savage ;
 And may that hatred, that contempt of thee,
 Which now I feel, pursue thy memory,
 And after ages execrate thy name !

S C E N E V.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS.

DUKE.

Yes, cruel prophet, I expect the doom
 Pronounc'd by thee, that discord's fatal hand
 Shall seize on all, and join us in the tomb.

LISOIS.

Rage has o'erpower'd him, and his senses fail.

DUKE.

What says my friend ? am I to suffer shame
 And insult thus ; and shall my haughty rival
 Bear off the false perfidious dear Amelia ?
 Wilt thou bear this, or wait'st thou till the traitor
 Shall raise a pow'rful faction to enslave me ?

LISOIS.

L I S O I S.

Too well I see, my Lord, the royal party
Hath spread sedition thro' the multitude,
And shook their faith.

D U K E.

Vamir lights up the flame:

He has betray'd us all.

L I S O I S.

I never meant

To palliate Vamir's crimes, for much I dread
The fatal consequence ; already France
Is arm'd against us. If the people seek
Their safety in rebellion, all is lost :
Danger's on ev'ry side.

D U K E.

What's to be done ?

L I S O I S.

Prevent it : rage and love must be subdued ;
Then may we conquer all. We must be firm
And resolute ; avoid or brave the storm :
Do as thou wilt, my hand is ready still
To aid my friend. This morning thou had'st thoughts
Of treating with the king : if thou command'st,
I'll go, my lord, ev'n now, and sue for peace ;
Or if we try the fortune of the day,

The :

The faithful Lisois shall attend thee still :

There, if thou fall'st, thy friend shall not survive thee.

D U K E.

Alone I will descend into the grave :

Live thou, to serve my cause, and to revenge me.

My hour is come, I must fulfil my fate :

Who wishes but for death, is sure to find it ;

But mine shou'd come with all his terrors round him ;

I must have vengeance ; and whene'er I fall,

Will drag my rival with me to the tomb.

L I S O I S.

What horrid thoughts are these !

D U K E.

In yonder tow'r

He is confin'd: 'tis under thy command,

And thou did'st promise, that when'er —

L I S O I S.

Of whom

Speak'st thou, my lord, a brother ?

L I S O I S.

No: a traitor,

My worst of foes, a rival who abhors me ;

One who has robb'd me of my dearest treasure :

The Moor demands his head, and I have promis'd

To give it him.

L I S O I S.

LISOIS.

Ha! promis'd to shake off
The bonds of nature and humanity!

DUKE.

Long since they had proscib'd him.

LISOIS.

And to them,
Thou yield'st his life?

DUKE.

Not to their vengeance only,
But to my own, which shall be satisfy'd.
What is the Moor to me, or what my country?

LISOIS.

To love then you wou'd make the sacrifice,
And I must be the executioner.

DUKE.

No: I expect not so much justice from thee;
I am a wretch, abandon'd and forlorn,
Betray'd by love, deserted by my friend;
But there are those who yet will keep their promise;
Others, perhaps, may serve me, nor alledge
Such poor excuses for ingratitude.

LISOIS.

[After a long silence.]

I am resolv'd; and be it guilt or justice,
Ne'er shalt thou say, that Lisois hath betray'd thee:
Thou art unhappy: Vamir is a traitor.

It

It is enough ; I love thee, and consent :
 There is a time for desperate extremes,
 When duties the most sacred must give way
 To hard necessity : at such an hour
 I cannot suffer thee to try the faith
 Of any heart but mine : success alone
 Must prove my friendship : soon shalt thou determine
 Whether thy Lisois lov'd thee, and was faithful.

D U K E.

Once more in sorrow I behold a friend ;
 Deserted by the world, in thee I find
 My only refuge : thou wilt not permit
 A haughty rival to insult my rage,
 To trample on my ashes, and enjoy
 My kingdom in the arms of my Amelia.

L I S O I S.

I will not ; but in recompence for this,
 I must demand another sacrifice.

D U K E.

What is it ? speak.

L I S O I S.

I cannot bear the Moor,
 Our insolent protector ; cannot bear
 To see him lord it o'er thy noble subjects.
 I wou'd not serve a tyrant, nor submit

To

To shameful slav'ry for a poor support
 We do not want; 'tis in our pow'r at least
 To die without him: leave to me, my lord,
 The conduct of this day, perhaps my service
 May claim it of thee: Lisois and the Moor
 Wou'd ne'er agree: I must command alone,
 To the last hour.

DUKE.

Thou shalt: I'll give thee all
 Thou can'st desire, let but Amelia feel
 Despair like mine, and weep in tears of blood
 Her treach'rous lover: let me hear her groans
 In my last moments to delight my soul;
 And for the rest, 'tis equal all: to thee
 I trust my glory; go, dispose, command,
 Prepare thee for the field. I hope not now
 For vict'ry, nor for honourable death;
 For what is honour to a heart like mine,
 Sunk in despair! O, be the sad remembrance
 Of a false mistress, and a cruel rival,
 Bury'd with me in everlasting silence!

LISOIS.

Eternal night, if possible, shou'd hide
 Such dreadful deeds: wou'd death had clos'd our eyes
 Before this day of horrors; but I go
 To keep my word, and save my friend. Farewell.

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT

A M E L I A: Or,
A C T V. S C E N E I.

DUKE of FOIX, an Officer.

DUKE.

Perpetual mis'ry! am I doom'd to see
Nothing but faction, treason, and revolt?
Where are the rebels, do they mutiny?

OFFICER.

At sight of you, my lord, the croud dispers'd.

DUKE.

On ev'ry side I am oppress'd by Vamir;
All hearts are his; my mis'ries are complete,
But what hath Lisois done?

OFFICER.

His watchful courage
Defends our ramparts 'gainst the foe.

DUKE.

That soldier
You brought to me in secret, has he done
What I commanded?

OFFICER.

Yes, my lord: e'er now
He's at the tow'r.

DUKE.

'Tis well: a common arm
Will do it best, and execute my vengeance

Without

Without remorse : Lisois' uncertain heart
Was not to be depended on ; methought
He look'd with too much coolness on my rage ;
We seldom try to mitigate a grief,
Which we condemn : to other hands I'll trust
My great revenge. — Go thou, and fetch my standard,
Let it be brought upon the ramparts to me :
New dangers press, and for the field again
We must prepare : let the same zeal inspire thee,
And the same courage, imitate thy master,
And learn of him — to die,

[Exit Officer.

E'er this 'tis done.

A base ungrateful woman dips my hands
In brother's blood, and leads me to the tomb :
A guilty murth'rer, ha ! what means my heart ?
I've nourish'd vengeance long ; and shall I not
Enjoy it now ? I tremble : and a voice,
Solemn and sad, cries from my inmost soul,
Stop, Foix, he is thy brother, hapless prince,
Call back the murth'rer : Vamir was thy friend.
O sweet remembrance of our infant years,
When in the days of innocence our hearts
Spoke nature's language, and imparted free
Our mutual wishes ! O, how oft has Vamir
Partook my griefs, and with a brother's hand

Wiped

Wiped off the falling tears ! and shall I now
 Destroy him ? O thou fatal passion, where,
 Where hast thou led me ? sure I was not born
 This savage, this barbarian : Vamir yet
 Was guilty ; Vamir robb'd me of my life,
 In my Amelia : still I am unjust ;
 He lov'd ; was that a crime to merit death ?
 Alas ! nor time, nor war, nor absence, cool'd
 Their faithful passion ; still their guiltless flame
 In purest lustre shone, before my heart
 Was poison'd by the cruel draught of love :
 But Vamir braves my wrath, and is my foe ;
 Deceives me, hates me ; yet he is my brother :
 He shou'd have liv'd, he was belov'd, and happy,
 And only I shou'd perish : I will die
 But, as I liv'd, with honour. Pity melts me,
 Nature determines, and I will forgive him.
 'Tis time —

S C E N E II.

DUKE of FOIX, an Officer.

DUKE.

Prevent a parricide : away,
 Haste to the tow'r, reverse my orders ; go,
 And let my brother——

OFFICER.

OFFICER.

O my Lord——

DUKE.

What say'st thou !

Run, fly, obey me.

OFFICER.

Near the gate this moment

I saw a body cover'd o'er with blood,

Carry'd in secret forth by Lisois' orders,

And much I fear——

DUKE.

O heav'n ! my brother's dead

And I yet live : earth hath not swallow'd me,

Nor light'ning blasted a base murderer,

Foe to his country, an unnat'ral brother,

How love has chang'd me ! what a load of guilt

Have I to answer for ! the veil's remov'd ;

And now, alas ! I know myself too well ;

I cannot be more guilty : O my brother !

I feel I lov'd thee, yet I slew thee, Vamir.

OFFICER.

Amelia comes, my Lord, and begs to speak

In private with you.

DUKE.

O ! I must not see her,

Not for the world : I cannot bear it : no,

She

She will revenge the murther in my blood :
But let her come : I tremble to behold her.

S C E N E III.

DUKE of FOIX, AMELIA, THAIS,
AMELIA.

My lord, you have prevail'd : and since that hatred
(How can I call it by another name)
Which hath so long pursued me, now requires
A brother's blood, or his Amelia's hand,
Take it : the choice is made, and I am thine ;
Remember, I'm the purchase of thy guilt :
Loosen his chains, and set my Vamir free,
That I no more may tremble for his life,
And I will give thee all, yield up my hopes
Of happiness with him, and follow thee,
Ev'n to the altar ; there the hand that gives
My faith away shall punish all my weakness.
Know, at the temple, where thy bridal vows—
But thou desir'st my hand, and that alone
I have to give thee : ha ! thou'rt silent : say,
Is Vamir, is thy brother freed already ?

DUKE.

My brother !

A M E L I A.

Gracious heav'n —remove my fears,
Thy eyes are bath'd in tears.

DUKE.

DUKE.

Thou ask'st his life.

AMELIA.

What do I hear? didst thou not promise me——

DUKE.

It is too late.

AMELIA.

Too late! O Vamir!

DUKE.

Yes,

It is indeed: wou'd it were not, Amelia;
The cruel Lisois has obey'd my orders
Too faithfully: O live, to punish me;
Pierce this inhuman, this unnat'ral heart,
That lov'd thee but too well: I kill'd my brother,
But for thy sake: revenge on me the crimes
Which but for thee I never had committed.

AMELIA. [Falling into the arms of Thais,
Vamir is dead, barbarian!

DUKE.

And thy hand
Shall shed the murth'rer's blood.

AMELIA.

[Fainting.

And is he gone?

My Vamir——

DUKE.

A M E L I A : Or,

D U K E.

Thy reproaches — —

A M E L I A.

Spare me, spare me,
 I'll not reproach thee ; take thy sorrows hence,
 And thy repentance : let me but embrace him,
 And die.

D U K E.

Amelia, thou hast too much cause
 To grieve, but O for pity take this life
 That's hateful to me ; but I've not deserv'd
 To perish by thy hand ; but thou shalt guide——

S C E N E IV.

D U K E, A M E L I A, L I S O I S.

L I S O I S.

What wou'd thy rashness do ?

[They disarm him.]

D U K E.

An act of justice :

Punish myself.

A M E L I A.

Wert thou his vile accomplice ?

D U K E.

Thou minister of guilt, thou hast obey'd me.

L I S O I S.

L I S O I S.

I promis'd you, my Lord, and I have done
But what I ought.

D U K E.

Thy stubborn virtue oft
Hath check'd my follies, and oppos'd my weakness;
But when I bade thee be a murderer,
And kill my brother, then thou wert obedient.

L I S O I S.

When I refus'd but now to execute
The bloody office, did'st thou not employ
Another hand?

D U K E.

Love, pow'rful love, that chain'd
My reason down, and sway'd my foolish heart,
Love pleads for me; but thou whose wisdom calms
Each rising passion, whose unalter'd soul,
Firm and unshaken, I so oft have fear'd,
So oft respected, that thou, thus unmov'd,
Shoud'st suffer such a deed of horror;
'Tis terrible!

L I S O I S.

Since sorrow and repentance,
Virtue's best monitors, have pierc'd thy soul
With just remorse: since, spite of all thy rashness,
To save a brother's blood thou gladly now

Woud'st

Woud'st give thy own ; ye both shall find a friend.
Keep thou thy penitence.

[To the duke.

Dry up thy tears.

[To Amelia.

This is a day of triumph. Prince come forth :
Embrace thy brother.

[The scene opens, and discovers Vamir,

A M E L I A.

O my Vamir !

D U K E.

Ha !

My brother !

A M E L I A.

Gracious heaven !

D U K E.

Can it be ?

Again I see, again embrace my brother.

D U K E.

O thy forgiveness makes my crime still greater.

A M E L I A.

O noble Lisois, thou hast giv'n me life.

D U K E.

Life to us all.

L I S O I S.

Abase assassin rais'd

His arm 'gainst Vamir, but I fell'd the traitor,
And laid him breathless at my feet, then feign'd

That

That I had shed thy brother's blood : I knew
Thou woud'st repent, and with the deed undone.

DUKE.

This was a service I can ne'er reward,
But by endeav'ring to be worthy of it :
My crime sits heavy on me, and my eyes,
Fix'd on the earth, dare not look up to Vamir,
And to the wrong'd Amelia.

VAMIR.

We wou'd both
Have serv'd thee with our royal master ; both
Are still devoted to thee. What, my brother,
Is thy design ? O speak.

DUKE.

To do you justice :
To expiate, by the greatest punishment,
The greatest crime that love and fierce resentment
Cou'd e'er commit : long I ador'd Amelia ;
Ev'n when I gave her Vamir up to death,
I lov'd Amelia : I adore her still,
Nay more than ever, yet I yield her to thee,
And sacrifice my heart to make you blest.
'Take her, be happy, and forgive thy brother.

VAMIR.

Behold me at thy feet, with gratitude
Warm as thy bounty, as thy love sincere.

AMELIA.

AMELIA.

Permit me to embrace thy knees with Vamir,
 Accept our tend'rest friendship, for thy goodness
 Has amply paid for all my suff'rings past.

DUKE.

No more of this, it doubles my misfortunes,
 And shews me but what happiness I've lost :
 But I will learn from you to follow virtue,
 My heart is yours : I'm now indeed thy brother,
 By thy example I will love my country.
 Let us away, and to the king relate
 My crimes, my sorrows, and thy happiness :
 Let Vamir's zeal and Vamir's truth be mine,
 Faithful to France, to friendship, and to thee ;
 Foix shall deserve your pardon and your praise ;
 Ye shall forget his follies and his crimes,
 And henceforth know him only by his virtues.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.



AMELIA.

Permit me to embrace thy knees with Vamir,
Accept our tend'rest friendship; for thy goodness
Has amply paid for all my suff'rings past.

DUKE.

No more of this, it doubles my misfortunes,
And shews me but what happiness I've lost :
But I will learn from you to follow virtue,
My heart is yours : I'm now indeed thy brother,
By thy example I will love my country.
Let us away, and to the king relate
My crimes, my sorrows, and thy happiness :
Let Vamir's zeal and Vamir's truth be mine,
Faithful to France, to friendship, and to thee ;
Foix shall deserve your pardon and your praise ;
Ye shall forget his follies and his crimes,
And henceforth know him only by his virtues.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.



